CHAPTER 2

THE MEANING OF *MEMRA, SHEKINAH,* AND *YEQARA* AND THEIR THEOLOGICAL USE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Introduction

Although targumic scholars may not use agent-terminology to describe *Memra*, they present the *Memra* as performing the works of God in the world and at least imply his role as God's agent. Similarly, scholars present the targumic *Shekinah* and *Yeqara* as manifestations of God. The primary division regarding these terms occurs because many scholars neglect their Christological implications. Scholars like Paul Billerbeck, Kauffman Kohler, and Robert Hayward, who may not agree with the Christological appropriations of these terms in the New Testament, still affirm that John's *Logos* is similar to the targumic *Memra*, if not identical. Indeed, the New Testament authors explain biblical and theological concepts about Jesus by using terminology and concepts similar to the Targums. They explain Jesus' deity by connecting his person and work to Old Testament portrayals of God sometimes using targumic concepts. The New Testament authors explain God's work in the world through his preeminent agent, Jesus (Col 1:15–17). In addition, the New Testament authors use terms similar to the Targums to speak of Jesus as the Son through whom man sees the Father (John 14:9). Jesus is God dwelling among men, displaying the glory of God as the visible manifestation of the Godhead (John 1:14). By employing these targumic terms (*Memra, Shekinah*, and *Yeqara*) and by expanding the targumic concepts of divine agency and manifestation, the New Testament authors provide an exegetical pattern by which one can find Christ in the Old Testament.

Memra, *Shekinah*, and *Yeqara*: Meaning and Old Testament Theological Significance

Within the targumic traditions, *Memra*, *Shekinah*, and *Yeqara* have meaning independently from their New Testament appropriation. Understanding these terms in their targumic context provides a basis to discover how the New Testament authors used similar terms and concepts. In their targumic context, these terms seem to have originated from theological concepts already found in the Hebrew Bible. Consequently, *Memra, Shekinah,* and *Yeqara* represent more than an exegetical or translational invention. Indeed, they are theological interpretations of God's active presence in the world.

Memra (מימרא)

Fundamentally, *Memra* means "word," "decree," "command," or "speech."[1] *Memar* (מימר) sometimes translates Hebrew contexts with a voice, either of God or of man (*Tg. Onq*. Gen 3:17; 4:23), and carries this basic meaning. Hayward and Vermes agree that *Memra* essentially means "word" or "speech," but they argue exegetically that *Memra* represents God's active presence in speaking. They combine the אמר word group with the Divine Name (אהיה) from Exodus 3:12, 14 to say that God's *Memra* is his אהיה, namely his audible, active presence.[2] As such, *Memra* represents more than just God's "speech" or "command." Instead, *Memra* alludes to God's actual presence invoked through his name. Hayward and Vermes introduce the idea that the basic lexical

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[1]Marcus Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli, and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005), 775; Gustov Dalman *Aramäisch-Neuherbräisches Handwörterbuch Zu Targum, Talmud, und Midrasch* (Hildesheim, Germany: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1967), 234; Michael Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic of the Talmudic and Geonic Periods* (Ramat-Gan, Israel: Bar Ilan University Press, 2002), 670; idem, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine Period,* 2nd ed. (Ramat-Gan, Israel: Bar Ilan University Press, 2002), 305; Jacob Neusner and William Scott Green, eds., *Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period: 450 B.C.E. to 600 C.E.* (New York: Macmillan, 1996), 2:422.

[2]See Robert Hayward, "The Holy Name of the God of Moses and the Prologue of St. John's Gospel," *NTS* 25, no. 1 (1978): 16–32; and Pamela Vermes, "Buber's Understanding of the Divine Name Related to Bible, Targum and Midrash," *JJS* 24, no. 2 (1973): 147–66.

definition of *Memra* has further theological meaning and implications.

Some scholars provide additional meanings for *Memra* that highlight the theological development of the term as it is used in the Targums. Marcus Jastrow gives the secondary meaning, "hypostatized," when the term is used in the phrase מימרא דיי ('Word of the Lord'), and he further defines this hypostatization as "the Lord."[3] Gustav Dalman points to a secondary meaning, "person," but he separates this definition from the phrase מימרא דיי, which he lists as a third meaning, citing *Onqelos* Numbers 11:23.[4] For Dalman, the phrase מימרא דיי represents "God (as speaking or acting in the world)."[5] Jacob Neusner also extends the meaning of *Memra* beyond its lexical basics. Although he refuses to ascribe hypostasis or personal subsistence to the *Memra*, he says, "It designates the active attribute of God—usually linked to commanding. Under that general rubric, it can be used to describe him speaking, creating, acting, punishing, or receiving worship."[6] These scholars recognize that the *Memra* reflects a theological meaning determined by its use in the Targums.

Indeed, the Targums present the *Memra* as more than just a "word" or "decree." *Neofiti* Genesis 1–2 attributes the creation of the universe to the *Memra*. *Neofiti* Exodus 14:30 says that the *Memra* redeemed Israel from Egypt. Likewise, the *Memra* fought Israel's battles as they entered the promised land in *Targum Joshua* 10:14. In the Abrahamic narrative, *Onqelos* Genesis 15 suggests that the *Memra* was God's

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[3]Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim,* 775. Although Jastrow's dictionary entry is minimal, he equates the מימרא דיי with "the Lord" similarly to how many scholars would equate the angel of the Lord with Yahweh (see, e.g., Stephen L. White, "Angel of the Lord: Messenger or Euphemism?" *TynBul* 50, no. 2 [1999]: 299–305). Where the angel of the Lord is active, most evangelicals would say that is the Lord acting in time and space. Jastrow makes the same assumption regarding the *Memra*. Where the *Memra* of the Lord is active, it represents God's activity in the world.

[4]Dalman, *Aramäisch-Neuherbräisches Handwörterbuch*, 234.

[5]Ibid. Dalman's definitions align him with Jastrow and others. The *Memra* is "God (as acting or speaking in the world)." In addition, Dalman points out the aspect of "person" in the *Memra*.

[6]Neusner, *Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period*, 2:422.

agent to communicate the covenant to Abraham and to mediate the covenant sign.[7] In each of these cases, the *Memra* carries out a role beyond verbal speech or declaration from God. In fact, the *Memra* functions as God's agent in the Targums by doing the work that the Hebrew Bible ascribes to God.

These uses of *Memra* as an agent in the Targums seem to be derived from Old Testament theology rather than a translational invention of Rabbinic Judaism. Since the Targums were the official interpretation of the Hebrew Bible, the *Memra* stands as a term used to *explain* God's active presence in Israel's history. God often used agents to carry out his purposes in the Old Testament.[8] Indeed, Scripture equates some of these visible agents with God similarly to how Targum equates מימרא דיי with יהוה.[9]

While these visible agents help one see how God works in the world, some Old Testament passages even suggest that God's Word functions as an agent. Psalm 33:6 says that that heavens were created "by the word of the Lord" (בדבר יהוה), where the ב functions as an instrumental ב.[10] The phrase "breath of his mouth" (ברוח פיו) in Psalm

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[7]Cf. the Noahic covenant (*Tg. Onq.* Gen 9:12–15, 17) and the Sinai covenant (*Tg. Onq.* Exod 31:13, 17), in which the *Memra* functions as the agent and mediator of the covenant signs of the rainbow and Sabbath respectively.

[8]See, for example, the fourth man in the fiery furnace (Dan 3:25, 28); Angel of the Lord (Gen 16:9–11, 22:11; Exod 3:2; 14:19; Num 22:22–27); Spirit of God (Exod 31:3; Num 24:2; Ps 143:10); and Wisdom (Prov 3:19). Cf. *Tg. Judg* 6:12 where the Angel of the Lord appears to Gideon. The Angel of the Lord identifies himself as the *Memra* of the Lord when he speaks to Gideon.

[9]E.g., in Gen 18–19, "the Lord" appears to Abraham (Gen 18:1), and yet Abraham sees "three men" standing before him to deliver the message from the Lord (Gen 18:2). The Lord speaks with Abraham in this interchange (Gen 18:10, 13), but later only two of the men (now called angels) enter Sodom (Gen 19:1). The third man was seemingly a manifestation of the Lord, while the other two were agents to carry out God's vengeance against Sodom. Likewise, in Gen 32:22–32, Jacob wrestles with "a man" (ויאבק איש עמו) who is later identified as God (אלהים, Gen 32:28, 30; cf. Hos 12:3–4). Even the Old Testament identifies them as visible agents while simultaneously calling them "God."

[10]Francis Brown, et al., eds. *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, With an Appendix Containing Biblical Aramaic* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), 89, III 2a; Ronald Williams, *Williams' Hebrew Syntax,* 3rd ed., rev. John C. Beckman (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), §243; E. Kautzsch, ed., *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, trans. A. E. Cowley (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2006), §119o; Paul Joüon, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew,* trans. T. Muraoka, vol. 2 (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2000), §132e, §133c.

33:6b may suggest that the "word of the Lord" in 33:6a only means his speech. However, some targumic manuscripts translate Psalm 33:6 as the *Memra* of the Lord indicating that Jewish exegetes understood this passage to be speaking of God's agent rather than his verbal speech only.[11] Psalm 107:20 highlights the role of God's word as an agent of healing, while Psalm 147:15 portrays God's word as running across the earth. Furthermore, in Psalm 103:20, God's word is personified as having a voice that should be obeyed. This authoritative "voice" is God's דבר. In Psalm 105:19, the Word (אמרת) of the Lord refined Joseph, where אמרת stands as the subject of the verb. In other words, the "Word of the Lord" (אמרת יהוה) performed God's work of testing Joseph. Here, the Targum translates אמרת as *Memra* suggesting the interpretation of agency in this passage, not "command." Although the Old Testament phrase "word of the Lord" typically denotes God's message or speech to the prophets, the passages just listed suggest that God's Word also functions as an agent or takes on anthropomorphic characteristics in the Hebrew Bible. Since God's דבר implies his presence, the Targums extend the theology of the Hebrew Bible throughout their interpretations of Scripture. Where God is present and active, the Targums often interpret that it is God's agent, his *Memra*, who acts.

***Shekinah* (שכינה) and *Yeqara* (יקרא)**

In general, *Shekinah* and *Yeqara* allude to different nuances of the same basic meaning, namely God's manifestation. At times, the *Shekinah* stands as God's presence with his people, while at other times, the *Yeqara* functions as the manifestation of God to Israel. Both words indicate God's manifestation, and they are often used interchangeably

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[11]David M. Stec, *Targum of Psalms*, The Aramaic Bible 16 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004), 22–23, 73ng. The vast majority of the occurrences of דבר in the Hebrew Bible are translated in the Targums as פתגם or מלא, not מימרא. Even if the Targum interpreted this verse to be God's speech only, the tradition still indicates God using an agent to accomplish his work. That agent/instrument is his speech. The targumist then could extend this idea theologically into the rest of the Targums when God acts in the created order through an agent.

or even in tandem. *Onqelos* Numbers 14:14 illustrates this tight connection. The Hebrew Bible says that the Lord (יהוה) was among his people, he was seen face to face, and his presence stood over them as a pillar of cloud at day and fire at night. *Onqelos* Numbers 14:14 interprets that the *Shekinah* dwelled amongst Israel. Rather than Israel seeing God face to face they saw "with their eyes" the "*Shekinah* of the *Yeqara* of the Lord," which was the cloud that overshadowed them. Passages like this demonstrate the difficulty of separating the "dwelling presence" of God (*Shekinah*) from the "weighty/glorious presence" of God (*Yeqara*).[12] One often implies the other. Because these terms are so closely related, they will be considered together.

The term *Shekinah*, built on the Semitic root שכן, denotes "dwelling" or "settling."[13] In later rabbinic literature, it carried the meaning of "royalty," or a "royal residence," often being used to describe God's presence in the temple or his "Holy Abode."[14] In the Targums, *Shekinah* represents God's "divine presence" manifested in the world.[15] *Shekinah* often represents God's presence dwelling among the people of Israel (*Tg. Onq.* Num 35:34), or his presence in the tabernacle and temple (*Tg. Ps.-J.* Exod 40:34–35; *Tg. Ps.-J.* Deut 31:15; *Tg. Isa* 4:5). Sometimes, *Shekinah* is accompanied by a cloud of glory (*Tg. Ps.-J.* Exod 13:21; 20:21; *Tg. 2 Sam* 22:12). Combining the theological meaning of God's presence with the basic lexical meaning of

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[12]To say that *Yeqara* is the "weighty presence" of God highlights its relationship to the Hebrew כבוד. *Yeqara* is the awe-inspiring presence of God that demands and elicits awe, worship, and honor.

[13]Dalman, *Aramäisch-Neuherbräisches Handwörterbuch*, 423.

[14]Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim,* 1573; Martin McNamara, *Targum and Testament Revisited: Aramaic Paraphrases of the Hebrew Bible: A Light on the New Testament,* 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 148–53.

[15]Geoffrey Wigoder, Fred Skolnik, and Shmuel Himelstein, eds., *The New Encyclopedia of Judaism* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 709; Sokoloff, *Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic,* 550; idem, *Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic*, 1145; Jastrow, *Dictionary of the Targumim,* 1573.

"dwelling," the *Shekinah* represents the "dwelling presence" of God among his people.[16]

Being derived from the Hebrew שכן, *Shekinah* developed its meaning from the Old Testament. The glory of the Lord dwelled (וישכן כבוד יהוה) on Mount Sinai in Exodus 24:16. God dwelled with his people in the exodus and wilderness, leading them by a pillar of cloud at daytime and fire at night (Exod 13:21–22; Num 35:34). The presence of God dwelled in the tabernacle throughout the wilderness journeys (Exod 33:9), and then settled in the temple after Solomon had completed it (1 Kgs 8:10). In Exodus 15:17, Moses says that God will bring Israel into the place he has made for his own abode, indicating his promised presence with Israel in their land. God also promised his covenantal presence with Israel in Leviticus 26:12, promising to walk in their midst (והתהלכתי בתוככם) as their God. Numbers 5:3, describes God as a "dweller" in the camp (אשר אני שכן בתוכם).[17] In Deuteronomy 16:6, the place where God has chosen for his name to dwell indicates his presence, and the Targums translate this verse as the place where God's *Shekinah* dwells.[18] In each of these Old Testament examples, God's presence is explicit or he is described as "dwelling" with his people. Therefore, the Targums accurately extended the term *Shekinah* to interpret and explain biblical passages indicating God's presence.

While the *Shekinah* represents the nuance of God's dwelling presence, the

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[16]The *Shekinah* presence of God is often similar to the New Testament notion of the Holy Spirit's presence among believers. A visible manifestation typically is not present, and yet God's presence is a legitimate reality. Another parallel would be Jesus' teaching in Matt 28:20 that he will be with the disciples even to the end of the age. Even as he is preparing to ascend, Jesus says that his presence will be with the church. Although physical manifestation may be rare or unnoticed after Jesus' ascension, his presence in the church is a reality.

[17]The grammar of Num 5:3 uses a *Qal* participle as an accusative of situation to describe a "*habitual* or *abiding* state or activity" (Russell T. Fuller and Kyoungwon Choi, *Biblical Hebrew Syntax: A Traditional Semitic Approach* [Grand Rapids: Kregel, forthcoming], §16a, §16l). The participle functions as a descriptor of who God is rather than a verb indicating his action. In his nature, God is a "dweller" with his people in Old Testament theology.

[18]*Tgs. Onq., Neof., and Ps.-J.* all interpret the place where God's name will dwell as the promise of his *Shekinah* presence.

Yeqara represents God's "weighty" presence, often seen as the cloud of God's glory (*Tg. Onq.* Exod 40:38; *Tg. Onq.* Num 10:34). *Yeqara* is often used to translate the Hebrew כבוד and means "weightiness" or "heaviness."[19] Like the Hebrew כבוד, יקר highlights God's "honor," "dignity," and "glory."[20] The *Yeqara* often appears in heavenly visions, where the presence of God is seen at its very essence rather than in the created world (*Tg. Isa* 6:1). However, the *Yeqara* also represents God's manifest glory in the world. In *Onqelos* Exodus 16:7, Moses and Aaron warn the people that they will see the glory of the Lord, namely, a weighty manifestation of God in judgment because of Israel's grumbling. *Onqelos* Exodus 20:18 interprets the "thick darkness" where God dwelled at Sinai as "the dark cloud where the *Yeqara* of the Lord" dwelled. In *Onqelos* Genesis 28:13, the *Yeqara* "was standing" before Jacob and spoke with him as a manifestation and agent of God. Likewise, the cloud of the *Yeqara*, which covered Mount Sinai, "called out to Moses" (וקרא למשה) as the agent of God to deliver the Lord's message (*Tg. Onq.* Exod 24:16).[21] Like the other terms, *Yeqara* implies a deeper meaning based on its theological use in the Targums.

Just as *Memra* and *Shekinah* developed from Old Testament theology, *Yeqara* also finds its theological grounding in the Old Testament. God's glory (כבוד) is often manifested to God's people as a visible, weighty presence. The glory of the Lord dwelled on Mount Sinai in a thick cloud, and its appearance was like a "devouring fire" that all could see (Exod 24:16–17). At the completion of the tabernacle, the cloud of the glory of the Lord settled on the tabernacle, and Moses was unable to enter due to the

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[19]E.g., *Tg. Onq.* Gen 45:13; 49:6; *Tg. Onq.* Exod 16:7; 16:10; 29:43; *Tg. Onq.* Num 14:10; *Tg. Onq.* Deut 5:24. Also see BDB, 457 for the verbal form, כבד and 458–59 for the nominal כבוד.

[20]Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim*, 593; Dalman, *Aramäisch-Neuherbräisches Handwörterbuch*, 187; Sokoloff, *Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic,* 54; idem, *Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic*, 541.

[21]In *Tg. Onq.* Exod 24:16, *Yeqara* is not the subject of the verb קרא. However it is the nearest antecedent and should be understood as the one who "called out" to Moses.

heaviness of God's presence (Exod 40:34–36). Exodus 40:38 says that the cloud of God's glory would settle on the tabernacle by day and fire would be visible there at night. In both cases, the weighty glory of God's presence was evident in the tabernacle. Just as the "glory" of God (כבוד יהוה) was seen in the temple, so also the *Yeqara* was the manifestation of God's honor and dignity in the temple (*Tg. 1 Kgs* 8:11). Like *Shekinah*, the Targums interpret these passages from the Hebrew Bible that God's *Yeqara* was the weighty manifestation of God.

The basic meaning of these terms, along with their subsequent theological development within the Targums, provides the grounding to pursue the use of these terms outside of the Targums. Indeed, where other literature suggests God's use of an agent, one could probably find references to the *Memra* functioning similarly. Likewise, where God manifests himself in the world, a parallel to the *Shekinah* or *Yeqara* could often be made in the Targums. Since the Targums were the official, synagogue interpretation of Scripture, the New Testament documents become a fascinating place to find the use of similar terms and concepts as those in the Targums. In fact, the New Testament authors appear to use these three targumic terms, as well as their theological concepts, to speak of Jesus as God's divine agent and manifestation. If, according to New Testament revelation, Jesus functions analogously to the *Memra, Shekinah*, or *Yeqara*, one can return to the Targums and probably find Christ in the Old Testament through these terms.

Apostolic Use of Terms Similar to *Memra*, *Shekinah*, and *Yeqara*

Using terms similar to the Targums was an exegetical method possibly used by the New Testament authors. Specifically, they used terms similar to the definitions of *Memra, Shekinah,* and *Yeqara* just discussed, and yet the New Testament authors extended the theological ramifications of these targumic terms by applying them to Jesus. In the New Testament, Jesus is the agent of God and the premier manifestation of God

just as the *Memra, Shekinah,* and *Yeqara* represent the same theological concepts in the Targums. The discussion of how the New Testament authors may have used the Targums can be separated into how they used similar *terms* and how they applied similar targumic *concepts* behind those terms. The following examples indicate how the New Testament authors may have used terms similar to *Memra, Shekinah,* and *Yeqara*.

The *Memra* and *Yeqara* in John's Prologue

John began his gospel with the statement that the Word (*Logos*, *Memra*) was in the beginning *with* God and that the Word *was* God.[22] Using terminology similar to the Targums, John immediately identified Jesus as "the Word" (λόγος). According to John, Jesus is God *and* he is distinct from God similarly to how the Targums describe the *Memra*.[23] After establishing Jesus' nature as God, John said that Jesus was God's agent in creation. "All things were made *through* him" (John 1:3, 10, πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο).[24] John reminded his audience of Genesis 1 with "In the beginning," and

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[22]The discussions in this dissertation accept that John's *Logos* was derived primarily from the Aramaic Targums. Since the Targums explained God's actions in the created order using terminology derived from a theology of the Hebrew Bible, one could also say that John's *Logos* is derived from the Hebrew דבר. However, other arguments exist regarding the background of John's *Logos* terminology, and few scholars conclude that it was derived from the Targums. For surveys of various views and arguments, see Ronning, *The Jewish Targums and John's Logos Theology*, 1–9; Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John* (Peabody, MS: Hendrickson, 2003), 339–63; E. L. Miller, "The Johannine Origins of the Johannine Logos," *JBL* 112, no. 3 (1993): 445–57. For the targumic parallels specifically, see Craig Evans, *Word and Glory: On the Exegetical and Theological Background of John's Prologue*, JSNTSup 89 (Sheffield: JSOT Press), 1993), 114–24.

[23]Part of the difficulty defining *Memra* is the debate about whether the term implies personality, personhood, or hypostasis. This debate has dominated the discussion of *Memra* because the *Memra* stands in the place of יהוה grammatically, but is often presented as distinct from God. Therefore, like the *Logos*, the *Memra* is distinct from God, but also identified as God.

[24]Using δι' plus the genitive (αὐτοῦ) to indicate agency, John teaches that God created all things "through" Jesus. Oepke says, "The formula 'through Christ' is also to be taken more often in the sense that Christ mediates the action of another, i.e., the action of God, namely, creation (Jn 1:3; 1 C. 8:6; Col 1:16)" (Albrecht Oepke, "διά," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964], 2:66–67). For other instances of διά plus the genitive indicating agency, see Matt 1:22; 2:5; John 3:17; Eph 3:10; Rom 5:9; Phil 1:11; Phlm 7. Daniel Wallace also argues that διά plus the genitive reflects intermediate agency. See Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament with Scripture, Subject, and Greek Word Indexes* (Grand

identified Jesus as the same God who created all things *ex nihilo*.

In Genesis, the Targums interpret the *Memra* as God's creative agent similarly to how John describes Jesus. In *Neofiti* Genesis 1, *Memra* occurs nineteen times related to creation.[25] At times, the *Memra* only speaks and yet his speech effects creation (*Tg. Neof.* Gen 1:3, 6, 9, 11). The *Memra* "creates" the two great lights that rule the day and night (*Tg. Neof.* Gen 1:16; וברא ממרא דייי). The *Memra* also authoritatively named the created order, calling the dry land "earth" and the waters the "seas" (*Tg. Neof.* Gen 1:10; וקרא ממרא דייי). Furthermore, when the Hebrew Bible says, "and it was so" (ויהי־כן), *Neofiti* and *Fragmentary Targum P* interpret this to mean "it was so according to his *Memra*" (*Tg. Neof.* Gen 1:7, והוה כן כמימריה).[26] In each of these verses, the *Memra* was active in creation as the agent of God.

Several passages in *Targum Isaiah* indicate that God created "by his *Memra*." *Targum Isaiah* 44:24 says, "Thus says the Lord, who redeemed you and who established you from the womb: I am the Lord, Maker of all things. I suspended the heavens by my *Memra*, I completed the earth by my power." *Targum Isaiah* 44:24 limits the *Memra's* activity in creation to suspending the heavens. However, the tradition agrees with *Neofiti's* creation narrative that the *Memra* decreed the creation of the firmament and it was so "according to his *Memra* (*Tg. Neof.* Gen 1:6–9). *Targum Isaiah* 45:12 also indicates that God created "by his *Memra*." The Targum interprets the repetition of the

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Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 368, 432–34.

[25]In 17 of the 19 occurrences of *Memra* in *Tg. Neof.* Gen 1, *Memra* is the subject of verbs indicating an active participation in creation. Also, the *Frg. Tg. P* Gen 1–2 has *Memra* as the subject of verbs 25 times. See John Ronning, *The Jewish Targums and John's Logos Theology* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010), 21.

[26]Ronning, *The Jewish Targums*, 21. This way of speaking of the *Memra* could indicate a command or decree of the Lord rather than a personal agent. However, Ronning points to other passages in *Tg. Neof.* and *Frg. Tg. P* Gen 1 that indicate that the creation occurred "according to the decree of his *Memra*" (*Tg. Neof.* [mg.] Gen 1:3; *Frg. Tg. P* Gen 1:7). In addition, *Tg. Neof.* Gen 1:3 says there was light "according to the decree of his *Memra*, while *Frg. Tg. P* Gen 1:3 says, "there was light *through*/*by* his Word" (והוה נהור במימריה), indicating agency more than mere decree.

pronoun אנכי in the Hebrew Bible as a reference to the *Memra*.[27] The Targum reads, "I, by my *Memra*, I made the earth and I created mankind upon it."[28] *Targum Isaiah* uses the instrumental ב to indicate the *Memra* was the agent/instrument through whom God created the earth and established man upon it.[29]

Finally, the targumic tradition in the Psalter points to the *Memra* as the Creator. *Targum Psalms* 124:8 says, "Our help is in the name of the *Memra* of the Lord, who made heaven and earth." Here, the Targum links the "name of the *Memra*" with יהוה, and ascribes the action of "making" the heavens and earth to the Lord's *Memra*.[30] As mentioned previously, some targumic manuscripts of Psalm 33:6 interpret the דבר יהוה as the *Memra*.[31] In some of the Targums, the *Memra* creates, and John directly links this vocabulary to Jesus, the *Logos*, through whom all things were made.

In addition to the *Memra* functioning as God's agent in creation, *Neofiti* presents the *Yeqara* as active in creation as well.[32] The *Yeqara* set the two great lights in

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[27]אנא במימרי עבדית ארעא ואנשא עלה. For emphasis, the Hebrew would read, אנכי עשיתי ארץ ואדם עליה בראתי ("I, I made the earth, and man upon it, I created").

[28]In *Tg. Isa.* 45:12b, the parallel structure interprets God's "hand" in the Hebrew Bible as his "strength" in the Targum. That the pronoun, "I," is interpreted in the targumic tradition to refer to an agent of God (*Memra*) whereas his hands refer to an attribute (strength) suggests that the *Memra* is equal to God. This interpretation does not require hypostasis in the Targums, but the apparent gulf that stands between John's *Logos* and the *Memra* diminishes when the *Memra* is identified with God by carrying out the actions of God alone. Likewise, the verbs "to create" (בריתי) and "to make" (עבדית) are interpreted to refer to the *Memra's* actions whereas God's hand "stretched out" (נטו) the heavens.

[29]The grammar here suggests an instrumental ב instead of a ב of agency. Even so, the distinction between instrument and agency is miniscule. See Williams, *Williams' Hebrew Syntax*, §243 (instrumental ב) compared to §245 (ב of agent).

[30]The Targum maintains the divine name, יהוה, rather than using the typical targumic rendering, ייי.

[31]Stec, *Targum of Psalms*, 22–23, 73ng.

[32]While John does not directly ascribe creation to the "glory," he describes Jesus as having a visible glory from the Father (John 1:14). The "Word" who created all things displays the "glory" from the Father. That the Targums attribute creation to the *Yeqara* as well is indeed striking, especially when John combines these targumic terms in his prologue.

the heavens after the *Memra* had created them (*Tg. Neof.* Gen 1:17) indicating the active participation of the *Yeqara* in creation. The Targums also connect the *Yeqara* to the act of creation in *Neofiti* Genesis 2:3. The *Yeqara* "blessed the seventh day and sanctified it" because it was a Sabbath on which he rested "from all his work that the *Yeqara* of the Lord had done in creating" (מן כל עיבידתיה די ברה איקרה דייי למעבד).[33] In these verses, the *Yeqara* represents God's agent in creation similarly to the *Memra*.[34] In John 1:1–14, John labels Jesus as the creative Word and the one in whom the glory of God clearly resides.

The *Shekinah* and *Yeqara* in John 1:14

In John 1:14, John uses terminology similar to the targumic *Shekinah* and *Yeqara*. John recalls the title "Word" (corresponding to *Memra*), but describes the incarnation by saying that Jesus became flesh and "dwelt" (corresponding to *Shekinah*)

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[33]A similar phrase is used of the *Memra* in *Tg. Neof.* Gen 2:2. The *Memra* of the Lord "completed his work that he had created" (ואשלם . . . עיבידתיה די ברא) and then rested "from all his work that he had created" (מן כל עבדתיה די ברא). *Tg. Neof.* Gen 1–2 parallels the work of the *Memra* with the *Yeqara*. John, therefore, had no reason to distinguish between the creation work of the *Logos* and the visible "glory" shining from God's agent. Both are represented in the targumic tradition.

[34]Some have seen in the Targums a reference to God creating the universe "with/by wisdom." This interpretation is understandable, especially with the references to wisdom in Prov 8:25–31 (see also Ps 104:24; Prov 3:19). Wisdom "was beside him, like a master workman" (Prov 8:30). The simile used in Proverbs seems to indicate that wisdom was God's agent in creation, and even the Targums agree with this conclusion to some extent. *Tg. Neof.* Gen 1:1 says, "From the beginning, *with wisdom*, the Lord created and finished the heavens and the earth." The prepositional phrase, בחכמה, is an intentional targumic expansion that upholds God's unity and yet allows for another creative agent. However, *Tg. Neof.* explicitly identifies the agent(s) through the rest of the creation narrative as the *Memra* and the *Yeqara*, and yet in the first verse of the targumic literature, the synagogue leaders carefully upheld Jewish monotheism.

The New Testament primarily presents God's wisdom as wisdom related to salvation, not creation. In God's infinite wisdom, he sent Jesus to save. The New Testament also identifies Jesus as "the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor 1:24; Χριστὸν θεοῦ δύναμιν καὶ θεοῦ σοφίαν; cf. Col 2:3). The appositional phrases in 1 Cor 1:24 suggest that Jesus is the wisdom of God. Certainly this text is unrelated to Jesus as the Creator, and yet when combined with the Old Testament and targumic evidence, one could conclude that God created through Jesus as the wisdom of God. Therefore, the phrase in *Tg. Neof.* Gen 1:1 that God created "with wisdom" should not lead one to limit God's creative activity only through the agency of wisdom. Indeed, God created through the agency of Wisdom, who is Jesus, the *Memra*.

among men.[35] This manifestation of God in Jesus Christ displayed God's glory, a "glory as of the only Son from the Father." In this verse, John says that Jesus is the manifestation of divine glory that has made his dwelling among men. Mary Coloe says, "These terms from the Targums used in the Jewish synagogue worship may have provided the Johannine author with the theological tools to express the divinity they saw, heard, and experienced in Jesus."[36]

Regarding *Shekinah* and *Yeqara* in John 1:14, Köstenberger says this language is reminiscent of the tabernacle scene in Exodus 40:34–35.[37] In this passage, God's glory (כבוד יהוה) filled the tabernacle. Köstenberger refers to this scene because of John's use of *ἐσκήνωσεν* to say that the Word "tabernacled" among his people. That Jesus "tabernacled" among men refers to the *Shekinah* presence of God. In addition, *Neofiti* Exodus 40:34–36, 38 says that it was the "*Yeqara* of the *Shekinah* of the Lord" that descended upon the tabernacle.[38] Similar to targumic terminology, John refers to the presence of God in the tabernacle to speak of Jesus as the manifestation of God. God, in Christ, dwelled among men and manifested his "weighty" presence through the glory of the Son.

Further targumic evidence behind John's use of *Shekinah* and *Yeqara* is in

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[35]The association of *Shekinah* with "dwelt" is not intended to argue that John wrote in Aramaic. Indeed, the Aramaic *Shekinah* and the Hebrew *shakan* are related (see pgs. 41–42 above). The inclusion of *Shekinah* with "dwelt" terminology in John 1:14 is intended to show the similar language John uses rather than argue that he wrote in Aramaic.

[36]Mary L. Coloe, *God Dwells with Us: Temple Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001), 61.

[37]Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 41. See also Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 92.

[38]Exod 40:34–36 is an example of the close relationship between *Shekinah* and *Yeqara*. Although these terms have distinct nuances in meaning, they often indicate the same concept, namely the manifestation of God in the world.

Pseudo-Jonathan Exodus 33:9.[39] The cloud that descended on the tent of meeting and spoke with Moses was the "cloud of the Glory" (יקרא). The targumic interpretation of God's manifest presence was that his *Yeqara* was visibly present in the tent of meeting. With this scene in mind, it is not surprising that John says the Word has tabernacled among men and "we have beheld his *glory*" (John 1:14). Jesus is both God's agent and also his physical manifestation on earth. In order to explain Jesus' ontological identity as God, John used terminology similar to the Targums to teach that Jesus was God's glorious presence dwelling among men.

A final passage that connects *Shekinah* and *Yeqara* to John 1:14 is Exodus 34:6. In *Onqelos, Neofiti*, and *Pseudo-Jonathan* Exodus 34:6, the Targums interpret Moses' exclamation of God's "steadfast love and faithfulness" as his "abundantly doing kindness and *truth*." Combining the idea of God "doing truth" with him being a God, "gracious and merciful," some scholars see this passage as the impetus for John saying that the visible glory of God in Christ was "full of grace and truth."[40] In *Onqelos* and *Pseudo-Jonathan* Exodus 34:6, God caused his *Shekinah* to pass before Moses eliciting Moses' exclamation of God's grace and truth. In *Neofiti* Exodus 34:6, God caused the *Yeqara* of his *Shekinah* to pass before Moses. John used language similar to the Targums of Exodus 34:6 to indicate that Jesus manifests the Father's glory, "full of grace and truth."

The *Memra* in Revelation 19:13

Another passage in which John uses terms similar to the Targums is Revelation

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[39]Köstenberger, *John*, 41; Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 92; George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, 2nd ed., WBC 36 (Waco, TX; Word, 1999), 14; H. Mowvley, "John 1:14–18 in the Light of Exodus 33:7–34:35," *ExpTim* 95, no. 5 (1984): 135–37. These scholars point to Exod 33:9 as a background to John 1:14, but do not necessarily link John's prologue to the Targums.

[40]For a survey of studies on the relation between John 1:14 and Exod 34, see Anthony T. Hanson, "John 1:14–18 and Exodus 34," *NTS* 23, no. 1 (1976): 90–101. For how the targumic evidence bears on John's *Logos*, see Ronning, *The Jewish Targums and John's Logos Theology*, 62–69.

19:13. In John's eschatological vision, he sees the rider on the white horse coming to wage war against God's enemies. The rider is called, "the Word of God" (ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ), the familiar agent of the Targums (מימרא דייי). As the Word of God, Revelation 19:11–21 portrays Jesus as God's agent to execute justice through warfare. Jesus, who is faithful and true, sits upon his white horse to judge (κρίνει) and make war (πολεμεῖ; Rev 19:11; cf. Rev 3:14). To illustrate God's justice and warfare through the Word, John says that Jesus wears a robe dipped in blood, and he will tread the winepress of the wrath of God the Almighty (v. 15; cf. Matt 21:33). He is the King of kings and Lord of lords (v. 16; cf. 1 Tim 6:15; Rev 17:14), who alone has authority to execute justice. In John's vision, the "Word of God" leads God's army in the final battle against Satan and the forces that oppose God's people (Rev 19:13b). All of these descriptions indicate that Jesus is God's agent to save God's people by distributing justice on their enemies. While the title "Word of God" may seem arbitrary, God's use of an agent to carry out warfare and justice is evident. Jesus sits atop the white horse poised to execute justice over his enemies as God's divine agent. According to John, the Word of God is none other than the *Memra* who is God's agent for justice and warfare in the Targums.

***Memra* and judgment.** Similarly to how Jesus is God's agent to carry out justice (John 12:48; Rom 2:16), the *Memra* also executes retributive justice in the Targums. *Pseudo-Jonathan* Genesis 19:24 says that the *Memra* of the Lord poured out sulfur and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah as an act of judgment.[41] *Neofiti* Exodus 15:1 attributes to the *Memra* the punishment delivered to Egypt at the exodus. The Targums suggest that God will deliver covenantal curses through the *Memra* as retribution for their

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[41]Cf. *Tg. Neof.*, *Tg. Ps.-J.*, and *Frg. Tg. PVNL* Gen 19:24. *Tg. Ps.-J.* and *Frg. Tg. PVNL* all interpret "raining down" of the Hebrew Bible as God's favorable opportunity for repentance followed by the fire and brimstone of judgment. *Tg. Neof.* Gen 19:24 omits the "favorable rains" and declares that "the *Memra* of the Lord made sulfur and fire come down upon Sodom and Gomorrah from before the Lord, from the heavens."

disobedience in *Pseudo-Jonathan* Deuteronomy 28:20–22. Eschatologically, the *Memra* will destroy the nations in judgment according to *Targum Isaiah* 33:11. In each of these passages, the parallel between Jesus and the *Memra* as God's agent(s) to deliver judgment is clear. In John's final scene of God's active judgment in history, John used similar targumic language to portray Jesus as God's agent to deliver that judgment.

Several other targumic passages suggest that John may have understood Jesus as the *Memra* in his vision of divine judgment. *Targum Isaiah* 11:4 provides the background for several of the themes from Revelation 19, but attributes God's smiting judgment to the *Memra* rather than the "rod" from the Messiah's mouth.

Isaiah 11:1–4	There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.
Targum Isaiah 11:1–4	And the king will come forth from the sons of Jesse, and the Messiah will be raised up from his sons' sons. And a spirit will rest on him from before the Lord, a spirit of wisdom and understanding, a spirit of counsel and power, a spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. And the Lord shall bring him near to the fear of him. And he shall not be judging by the sight of his eyes, and he shall not be reproving by the hearing of the ears. And he will judge poor ones in truth, and he will reprove the poor of the people in faithfulness. But he will smite the sinners of the land by the *Memra* of his mouth, and by the speech of his lips he will kill the wicked.

Targum Isaiah interprets the "shoot" and "branch" from the Hebrew Bible as the "king" and "Messiah" to be raised up from the sons of Jesse. The Spirit-filled Messiah in Isaiah 11 will "smite the sinners of the land by the *Memra* of his mouth."[42]

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[42]The phrase "rod of his mouth" in Isa 11:4 parallels Rev 19:15 that Jesus rules with a "rod of

The Targum interprets a personal agent in the place of the "rod of his mouth." Isaiah 11:4, in both the Hebrew Bible and the Targum, presents a parallel construction in verse 4b.

Isaiah 11:4b	And he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth and with the breath of his lips, he shall kill the wicked.
MT Isaiah 11:4b[43]	והכה ארץ בשבט פיו וברוח שפתיו ימית רשע
Targum Isaiah 11:4b	And he shall smite the sinners of the land by the *Memra* of his mouth and by the decree of his lips, he will exist as one who kills the wicked.
Targum Isaiah 11:4b	וימחי חייבי ארעא במימר פומיה ובממלל ספותיה יהי מאית רשיעא

In the Hebrew Bible, the "rod of his mouth" is parallel to the "breath of his lips," both of which are involved in judging the wicked. Using the ב preposition, both of these phrases serve as instruments of judgment. The Targum highlights the *Memra's* agency in judgment by inserting *Memra* in place of "the rod of his mouth," and then corroborates this idea with a parallel instrument, "the speech of his lips."[44] Where the Hebrew Bible parallels the instrument of judgment (שבט) with the decree of judgment (רוח), so also the Targum parallels the instrument/agent of judgment (מימר) with the decree of judgment

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iron" and a sword protrudes from his mouth. However, that the Targums insert a personal agent, the *Memra*, in place of the rod suggests a closer link to Rev 19:13 and the use of "Word of God."

[43]All Hebrew and Aramaic texts are from Accordance Bible Software modules, BHS-W4, TARG-T, TARG2-T, TARG3-T, and TARGF-T. The passages designated as "MT," in this chart and others, assume the pointing of the Masoretic Text even though the provided text is unpointed.

[44]The phrase "speech of his lips" does not have to be understood as a decree only. Second Thess 2:8 says that when the lawless one appears, the Lord Jesus will kill him with the "breath of his mouth." Even in 2 Thess 2:8, this phrase could be understood metaphorically to refer to the effectual decree of judgment, and yet grammatically, the instrumental dative seems more likely. By interpreting 2 Thess 2:8 in this way, Paul's language is similar to *Tg. Isa* 11:4b, where Jesus stands as the personal agent/instrument of God to judge, but he does so by the "breath/speech of his lips." Alec Motyer connects "lips" and "mouth" in Isa 11:4 to Rev 19:15, 21 without any reference to the Targums indicating that he sees divine agency in this passage over mere speech. He says, "The king needs no other weapon than his word (Rev 19:15, 21), because his word is annexed to his *breath*, literally 'spirit' (as Ps. 33:6)." In J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC 20 (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1999), 118.

(ממלל). In the Targum, one instrument of God's judgment is the *Memra*. In Revelation 19, the agent of God's final judgment is called "the Word of God."

The context of *Targum Isaiah* 11:4 also connects the *Memra* with Jesus in Revelation 19:11–16. *Targum Isaiah* 11:4 says that the *Memra* "will judge the poor ones *in truth*" and "reprove the poor of the people *in faithfulness.*" These phrases refer to the Messiah judging the poor favorably in order to care for them, and yet the descriptors "truth" and "faithfulness" parallel the names of the rider on the white horse in Revelation 19:11. He is "called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war." The word used in the Targum for "truth" (קושטא) translates "righteousness" in the Hebrew Bible (צדק), and often means "righteousness" itself in the Targums.[45] That Revelation 19:11 says the one sitting on the white horse judges and makes war "in righteousness" (ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ) affirms a connection between the targumic agent and Jesus. Just as the *Memra* will judge in truth and faithfulness, so also Jesus will judge as the one who is called Faithful and True. John's use of "Word" in Revelation 19:13 once again seems to have a probable targumic background.

Targum Isaiah 63:1–8 also portrays the *Memra* in the context of judgment, and provides the background for other judgment themes found in Revelation 19:11–16. In *Targum Isaiah* 63:1, the Lord swore "by his *Memra*" to execute justice on the nations.[46] *Targum Isaiah* 63:3 describes this judgment sworn by the *Memra* as "stamping" (מתבעיט) the nations as in a winepress. In Revelation 19:13–15, Jesus' robe is red with blood because he has trodden the winepress of the wrath of God. Jesus, the Word of God, will carry out the judgment sworn by the *Memra*.

The broader context of Isaiah 58–63 suggests that God's agent will be Israel's

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[45]Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim,* 1429.

[46]Bruce Chilton says "military '*retribution*' is the principal issue" in *Tg. Isa* 63:1–3. In Bruce D. Chilton, *The Isaiah Targum: Introduction, Translation, Apparatus, and Notes*, The Aramaic Bible 11 (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1987), 121.

Savior by defeating their enemies in judgment. Not only is the *Memra* God's agent to execute this justice, but by doing so, the *Memra* also becomes Israel's Savior. Because no one was found righteous to execute justice (Isa 63:4), God's own arm brought salvation and his wrath upheld him (Isa 63:5).[47] *Targum Isaiah* 63:5 interprets God's wrath in the Hebrew as "by my pleasing *Memra*, I helped them" (ובמימר רעותי סעדתינון). In other words, God's *Memra* will help Israel by being the very wrath that slaughters the nations who oppose Israel. As Israel's Savior-Judge, *Targum Isaiah* 63:8 says, "Indeed they are my people, children who will not deceive, and my *Memra* has become their Savior."[48] *Targum Isaiah* 63:1–8 provides the background that the *Memra* of the Lord would execute justice by stamping God's enemies under foot. By doing so, the *Memra* graciously helps God's people and becomes their Savior. John describes Jesus similarly when he calls him the Word of God in Revelation 19:13.

***Memra* and warfare.** Further evidence that John used concepts similar to the targumic *Memra* in Revelation 19:13 is that the *Memra* is God's agent in warfare. Not only do the Targums present the *Memra* as the eschatological judge, but they also portray the *Memra* as the divine warrior who fights for Israel (cf. Rev 19:11b). When Israel was

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[47]Commenting on the Hebrew text of Isa 63:5, Alec Motyer says, "The whole work of judgment, like the whole work of salvation, is exclusively, uniquely, individually his" (Motyer, *Isaiah*, 434). In this sense, Motyer points out God's unilateral decision to uphold the salvation of his people *by* exacting justice on the nations who oppose them. In the Targum, the *Memra* decreed this judgment. This theme lines up well with Rev 19:11–16 in which Jesus, the Word, is God's agent to carry out the justice that the *Memra* decreed to carry out unilaterally. In addition, when one looks to the cross, again staining blood is involved and salvation comes to God's people through judgment on the Son, God's agent. See Grant Osborne, *Revelation*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 682–83, for the arguments that the blood on Jesus' robe in Rev 19:13 refers to the blood of the cross.

[48]The Aramaic of *Tg. Isa* 63:8 employs a *peal* participle as an accusative of situation to indicate occupation or perpetual behavior. In this sense, the *Memra's* occupation is a "Savior." *Tg. Neof.* Lev 22:32–33 combines this same terminology and grammar equating the Lord with the *Memra*, who "saves/redeems" (פרק). *Tg. Neof.* Lev 22:32–33 says, "And you should not desecrate my holy name, so that my honorable name may be sanctified among the children of Israel. I am the Lord who sanctified you, who redeemed you (פרקת) and brought you out of the land of Egypt redeemed (פריקין) so that my *Memra* might be to you a redeeming God (למיהוי במימרי לכון לאלה פרוק). I am the Lord who redeemed your fathers and will redeem you."

about to enter the promised land, Moses told them that the Lord's *Memra* will fight for them similarly to how he fought for them in Egypt (*Tg. Onq.* Deut 1:30). In *Targum Joshua*, the tradition indicates that the *Memra* fought the conquest battles for Israel (*Tg. Josh* 10:14). Likewise, *Targum Joshua* 23:3, 10 recounts the conquest by describing the *Memra* as the "fighter" for Israel.[49] *Targum Isaiah* 10:16 says "the Master of the Universe, the Lord of Hosts, will send a blow to his princes." In *Targum Isaiah* 10:17, God's "Holy One," namely his agent, is appositionally defined as "his mighty *Memra*" (*Tg. Isa* 10:17a; וקדישיה מימריה תקיף).[50] The *Memra* "will be like fire" and "slaughter and destroy" the Assyrians (*Tg. Isa* 10:17b; cf. Rev 19:12). After the defeat of Amalek in *Pseudo-Jonathan* Exodus 17, Moses built an altar and named it "The *Memra* of the Lord is my miracle" ascribing the miraculous defeat of the Amalekites to the *Memra* (*Tg. Ps.-J.* Exod 17:15).[51] In *Pseudo-Jonathan* Exodus 17:16, Moses says that *Memra* swore by his glorious throne that he would "wage war" (יגיח) against Amalek "from the generation of this world, and from the generation of the Messiah, and from the generation of the world to come." The targumic tradition not only identifies the *Memra* as the one who wages war for Israel, but also the one who will act as God's agent in warfare and judgment in

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[49]The Aramaic construction of *Tg. Josh* 23:3, 10 uses an *aphel* participle (מגיח) as an accusative of situation. The grammar here suggests regular action or occupation. That the participle occurs in a nominal clause also highlights the role or "occupation" of the *Memra*.

[50]מימריה תקיף is an explicative appositional construction to קדישיה, further defining it. See Fuller and Choi, *Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, §26; Williams, *Williams' Hebrew Grammar*, §70; Kautzch, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar,* §131f–g; and Joüon, *Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, §131h–k. One could possibly argue that this is "substitution apposition" (Fuller and Choi, *Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, §27) based on *Tg. Isa* 10:20 in which the apposition is flipped (מימרא דיוי קדישא דישראל). This construction could suggest an "all-for-all substitution" (ibid., §27b) in which these terms could be used interchangeably while not losing the meaning of either. Indeed, God's "Holy One" is "his *Memra.*" For Jesus as the "Holy One of God," see John 6:69; Mark 1:24; Acts 3:14; 1 John 2:20; Rev 3:14.

[51]The Aramaic in *Tg. Ps.-J.* Exod 17:15 interprets "the Lord is my banner" (יהוה נסי) as "this *Memra* of the Lord is my miracle" (מימרא דייי דין ניסא דילי). The Targum preserves the same Semitic root (נוס), but with different meaning than the Hebrew. In this way, the Targum interprets Moses' altar as a reference to the miraculous and decisive battle the *Memra* won against Amalek.

the future generations, indeed into the eschaton.

In each of these examples, the Targums indicate that God will execute final judgment and warfare through his agent, the *Memra*. Just as the *Memra* fought for Israel during the conquest, so also, he will fight for God's people in the final eschatological war that brings judgment on the nations and salvation for those who follow the "Word of God" on the white horse. Using similar targumic terms, John described Jesus as the "Word of God," who acts as God's agent to bring salvation through active warfare and judgment.

The *Yeqara* in John 12:41

The New Testament authors also speak of Jesus using a term similar to *Yeqara* (δόξα). In John 12:41, John says that Isaiah spoke of Israel's unbelief because "he saw his [Jesus'] glory and spoke of him."[52] John refers to two Isaiah passages, Isaiah 53:1 and 6:10 to point out Israel's inability to believe. John likely says that Isaiah saw Jesus' glory because *Targum Isaiah* 6:1 says that Isaiah saw the *Yeqara* of the Lord seated on the throne.[53]

Targum Isaiah 6:1 says, "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the *Yeqara* of the Lord dwelling on a throne, high and lifted up in the highest heavens, and the temple was filled with the splendor of his *Yeqara*." In standard targumic method, the

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[52]Ronning, *Jewish Targums and John's Logos Theology*, 32–34; Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, AB 29 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970), 486–87.

[53]Isa 6:1–10 and John 12:41 show a close connection between John and the Targums. John quotes Isa 6:10 in his explanation of why people will not believe the Son of Man. In *Tg. Isa* 6:8–10, the Targum indicates that the *Memra* of the Lord is the one speaking to Isaiah. With this in mind, the Targum explains that Isaiah saw the *Yeqara* of the *Shekinah* of the Lord as the manifestation of God's presence. Additionally, the *Memra* functioned as God's agent to prophesy his purposes and intentions for those who would not believe the Son of Man. John may have understood this connection and when the Jewish leaders failed to believe the Son of Man, he referenced Isa 6 to say that Isaiah saw the glory of the Son and heard God's purposes from the mouth of the Son. When John sees this prophecy fulfilled in Christ, he describes it using terminology similar to *Tg. Isa* 6. In addition, *Tg. Ps.-J.* Deut 4:7 quotes Isa 6 to explain the difference between Yahweh and the gods of the nations. In this quote, *Tg. Ps.-J.* Duet 4:7 says, "The *Memra* of the Lord sits on his throne, high and exalted . . . ." Indeed, Isaiah prophesied about Israel's inability to believe because he saw the Son's glory in the heavenly throne room.

tradition explains how Isaiah saw the Lord directly. Isaiah saw his "glory" (יקרא דיוי). God's revelation was a weighty manifestation of his glory according to the Targum. Similarly, *Targum Isaiah* 6:5 says that Isaiah saw the "*Yeqara* of the *Shekinah* of the King of eternity, the Lord of Hosts" (יקר שכינת מלך עלמיא יוי צבאות).[54] To explain how Isaiah saw God, the Targum substitutes that Isaiah saw the weighty manifestation of the King, his *Yeqara*.

After seeing God's *Yeqara*, Isaiah is told that he will go to a people who hear but do not understand (Isa 6:10). Like the people to whom Isaiah prophesied, the people John refers to in John 12:37–38 also failed to hear and believe Jesus' message. Although Jesus manifested God to the world through his miracles, the people still would not believe. Their eyes were blinded and their hearts were hardened (John 12:40). According to John, Isaiah said these things because he saw Jesus' glory (John 12:41).

The *Yeqara* in 2 Corinthians 4:4, 6

In 2 Corinthians 4:4, Paul uses terminology similar to *Yeqara* to speak of Jesus. He calls Jesus the "image of God," which suggests the manifestation of God. As God's premier image, Christ displays a "glory" (τῆς δόξης τοῦ Χριστοῦ) that can be found in the gospel. In 2 Corinthians 4:6, Paul elaborates on what he means by the glory of Christ in 4:4. In the gospel, God shines into the hearts of believers so that they clearly see "the glory of God" (τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ). However, this glory is not just ethereal honor or dignity; rather, it is the manifest radiance of God found "in the face of Jesus Christ" (ἐν προσώπῳ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ).[55] In Paul's understanding of the gospel, God causes people

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[54]In the Aramaic cited, *Yeqara* does not have the definite article because it is a construct form. However, the final noun in the entire construct package is definite (עלמיא) making the whole package definite.

[55]Thomas Schreiner explains the centrality and supremacy of Christ in 2 Cor 4:4–6, but he also says that the focus on Christ fails to "push God to the margins, for God's glory is maximized 'in the face of Jesus Christ'" (Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008], 307). In this sense, Jesus is not just *a* manifestation of God; rather, he is *the* premier

to see Christ for who he really is. Jesus is the image of God who displays the manifest glory of God in the world. When God shines the light of the gospel into human hearts, the glory of God radiates from the face of Christ.

The Targums do not provide a specific Old Testament parallel to 2 Corinthians 4:4, 6 as in *Targum Isaiah* 6:1 and John 12:41, and yet the overall meaning and context of *Yeqara* developed previously suggests that Paul may have understood Jesus to be the manifestation of God's *Yeqara*.[56] Just as the *Yeqara* was revealed to Israel when God gave them the Law (*Tg. Onq.* Exod 20:17–18), so also, in the New Covenant, Jesus manifests God's visible glory in the gospel. Indeed, Jesus *is* the glory of God in the gospel.

The *Yeqara* in Hebrews 1:3

The author of Hebrews also uses terminology similar to *Yeqara* when speaking of Jesus. In Hebrews 1:3, the author says that the Son through whom God has spoken to the world is "the radiance of the glory of God." As "the exact imprint of his [God's] nature," Jesus manifests God's character and radiates the divine glory of God. Commenting on the word *ἀπαύγασμα* in Hebrews 1:3, Donald MacLeod concludes that as the "radiance" of the glory of God, Jesus manifested the glory of the Father to the world.[57] Jesus sometimes is given the title, "Glory" (e.g., Jas 2:1), but here, the author of Hebrews says that Jesus reflects or displays the glory of God to the world. MacLeod

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manifestation of God's glory.

[56]To say that Paul certainly had in mind the targumic *Yeqara* is impossible to prove. Indeed, Paul may have had in mind the Hebrew כבוד. However, previous arguments showed that *Yeqara* was theologically derived from the Hebrew idea of God's weighty glory (כבוד), and so the words could be thought of interchangeably for Paul, a Pharisee, who was likely familiar with the targumic traditions on the Hebrew Bible. In addition, *Yeqara* of the *Shekinah* seems to exhibit a specific role to manifest God's activity in the world rather than an ethereal "glory." Indeed, the functional roles of Jesus and the *Yeqara* bear striking similarities.

[57]Donald MacLeod, *The Person of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1998), 80.

concludes,

> Christ is the Light from that Light, God's glory radiated and was made accessible to men, so that they were able to see his glory: glory as of an only begotten from a father (Jn. 1:14). He is the glory made visible; not a different glory from the Father's but the same glory in another form. The Father is the glory hidden: the Son is the glory revealed. The Son is the Father repeated, but in a different way.[58]

As in 2 Corinthians 4:4, 6, the author of Hebrews uses "glory" vocabulary similar to the Targums. The *Yeqara* is God's weighty glory just as Jesus is the "radiance of the glory of God."

***Shekinah* in the New Testament**

Unlike *Memra* and *Yeqara,* where New Testament terms like "Word" and "glory" correspond well, the New Testament authors do not use Greek equivalents to the term *Shekinah* often. However, the New Testament regularly speaks of Jesus as being God in the flesh (e.g., John 1:14; Phil 2; Col 1:20), indicating God's manifest presence in the world. Whereas *Memra* and *Yeqara* had specific Greek parallels, *Shekinah* must be understood according to its targumic meaning as the dwelling presence of God. Even so, a few New Testament passages use the language of "dwelling" to show that Jesus is the *Shekinah* presence of God (e.g., John 1:14, ἐσκήνωσεν).

Paul uses "dwelling" terminology in Ephesians 3:17 to illustrate the idea of Jesus "dwelling" in the hearts of those who put their faith in him. Paul prays that God's Spirit will strengthen believers "so that Christ may dwell (κατοικῆσαι) in [their] hearts through faith." Jesus certainly manifested God's presence among men while he was living on earth, but even after his ascension, Paul indicates that Christ continues to dwell in the hearts of believers as God's perpetual presence with his people.

As in Ephesians 3:17, Colossians 1:27 also points to the indwelling of Christ

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[58]Ibid.

after his ascension. Paul describes the glory of God's mystery, that the Gentiles would receive the same blessing of salvation as the Jews. This mystery is not just that Gentiles would receive a message of salvation, but that they would receive the very presence of God through Christ dwelling in them. Paul further defines the mystery as "Christ in you, the hope of glory."[59] While no direct transliteration of *Shekinah* exists in Colossians 1:27, Paul uses parallel targumic language to say that Jesus is the *Shekinah.* Indeed, Jesus *indwells* believers as the presence of God with them.

Using "dwelling" terminology, Revelation 21–22 also suggests that Jesus is the *Shekinah* presence of God. In the new heavens and the new earth, God will dwell (σκηνώσει) with his people because his dwelling place (ἡ σκηνή) is with man (Rev 21:3). As John continues to describe his vision, he says that the new Jerusalem will have no temple because the presence of God *and of the Lamb* will be in the city. The glory of God will provide the city with its light (Rev 21:23), but the lamp from which this light shines is the physical manifestation of God, the Lamb (Jesus). Revelation 22:3–4 says that "the throne of God and of the Lamb" will be in the city and that God's people will see his face. In Revelation 22:5, John once again says that there will be no need for light of a lamp because the radiant glory of God found in the face of Christ will be the city's light. Although the grammar indicates that *God's* presence is among men, John's context points to the presence of God *in Christ* dwelling among men throughout eternity. The *Shekinah* presence of God will be forever displayed in the person of Jesus Christ.

In addition to "dwelling" terminology, the New Testament also speaks of Jesus as "light," another reference to the *Shekinah.* The *Jewish Encyclopedia* points to *Onqelos* Numbers 6:25 as a reference to the *Shekinah* "shining" (ינהר) as visible light.[60] *Onqelos*

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[59]The relative clause, ὅ ἐστιν Χριστὸς ἐν ὑμῖν, ἡ ἐλπὶς τῆς δόξης, further explains the mystery in Paul's discussion. See Wallace, *Greek Grammar,* 336–37, 659–61 for relative pronouns and relative clauses respectively.

[60]Ludwig Blau, "Shekinah," in *The Jewish Encyclopedia: A Descriptive Record of the History,*

Numbers 6:25 says, "May the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you—May the Lord make his *Shekinah* to shine upon you and may he have mercy on you." Here, the *Shekinah* represents God's presence manifested as light. Using this targumic analogy of the *Shekinah* as visible light, one can find more explicit references to Jesus as the *Shekinah* in the New Testament. The author of Hebrews describes Jesus as the "radiance" (ἀπαύγασμα) of the glory of God, highlighting the brightness of God's glory in Jesus (Heb 1:3). In John 8:12 and 9:5, Jesus called himself "the Light of the world." John says in his prologue, "The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world" (John 1:9). As mentioned previously, the light that illumines the new heavens and new earth is from the Lamb (Rev 21:23; 22:5). Using "light" terminology, John labels Jesus as the *Shekinah* of God. Jesus is not a distant manifestation of God; rather, he is the *Memra* made flesh (cf. John 1:14).[61]

Although a consistent Greek equivalent for *Shekinah* is not used in the New Testament for Jesus, these examples show the range of meaning of *Shekinah* applied to Jesus. As the God-Man, Jesus dwells among and in his people, displaying the visible light of God's presence, just as the *Shekinah* in the Targums.

The Targumic Concepts of *Memra*, *Shekinah*, and *Yeqara* Corresponding to the Offices and Roles of Jesus

In addition to using terminology similar to the Targums, the New Testament authors also employed similar *concepts* to speak about Jesus. The New Testament

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Religion, Literature, and Customs of the Jewish People from the Earliest Times to the Present Day, ed. Isidore Singer and Cyrus Adler (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1901) 11:260.

[61]The consistency and diversity of John's use of these targumic terms in the prologue further highlights the connection between these terms and the New Testament. John was able to move from *Memra* to *Yeqara* to *Shekinah* using various nuances of each term. Jesus is the *Memra* made flesh, who dwells (*Shekinah*) with his people as the *Yeqara* of God. He shines as light (*Shekinah*) in the world, displaying God's active, manifest presence. John employs these terms as if they were the normal background images anyone would use to speak of God's manifest agent in the world.

authors spoke about Jesus' *role* as God's agent and manifestation similarly to how the Targums portray *Memra*, *Shekinah*, and *Yeqara*.

Divine Agency

Divine agency in creation. In the previous section, the targumic passages in which the *Memra* and *Yeqara* act as God's agent(s) in creation were discussed. *Neofiti* Genesis 1:3–31 interpreted the *Memra* as God's agent in creation, whereas *Neofiti* Genesis 1:17 and 2:3 highlighted the *Yeqara's* role in creation. The New Testament demonstrates how the authors expanded the concept of an agent in creation to refer to Jesus. While John may have used targumic terminology (*Memra*, 'Word') to teach that Jesus created all things (John 1:3, 10), the other New Testament authors employed the similar targumic *concept* of God creating through an agent in order to describe Jesus' role as Creator. In the New Testament, God's agent in creation is Jesus Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 8:6, Paul recalls Malachi 2:10 to argue that Jesus is "the Lord" through whom all things exist.[62] The structure of 1 Corinthians 8:6 is split by the conjunctive, καί, and all that follows the conjunctive refers to Christ.[63] With this structure, 1 Corinthians 8:6b teaches that God the Father is the source of creation and Jesus is the agent.[64] Paul, like John, uses δι' plus the genitives οὗ and αὐτοῦ respectively,

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[62]1 Cor 8:6 reads, "yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist." Mal 2:10 says, "Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why then are we faithless to one another, profaning the covenant of our fathers?"

[63]Gordon Fee says, "Although Paul does not here call Christ God, the formula is so constructed that only the most obdurate would deny its Trinitarian implications. In the same breath that he can assert that there is only one God, he equally asserts that the designation 'Lord,' which in the OT belongs to the one God, is the proper designation of the divine Son." In Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 375.

[64]For ἐξ as source, see Matt 1:3 and 21:19. See also Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 371–72. For a discussion of these varying prepositions, see N. Richardson, *Paul's Language about God* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 296–304; Vincent Taylor, *The Person of Christ in NT Teaching* (London: Macmillan, 1958), 51; Oscar Cullman, *Christology of the NT* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1959), 197 and 247.

to indicate intermediate agency.[65] Paul highlights Jesus' ontological identity with the Father, especially since Malachi 2:10 teaches there is "one God who created us" (אל אחד בראנו). Paul seems to apply Malachi 2:10 to Jesus, as God's agent who brought all things into existence. In this passage, Paul suggests that the "one God" from Malachi 2:10 created through his agent, Jesus.

In Colossians 1:16, Paul affirms more directly that Jesus created all things.[66] Early in the verse, Paul uses the instrumental dative (ἐν αὐτῷ) rather than the typical διά plus a genitive.[67] To distinguish between instrument and agent is quite unnecessary, especially in this passage.[68] Paul clarifies that Jesus is God's agent when he says, "all things were created through him and for him" (τὰ πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἔκτισται) using the typical construction of agency, δι' αὐτοῦ .[69] Using the instrumental dative *and*

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[65]See Anthony Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians,* NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 636, for his discussion of Jesus as the "mediate creator." See also Murray Harris' discussion of the interplay between the two prepositions ἐξ and διά in Murray J. Harris, *Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament: An Essential Reference Resource for Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 70–71.

[66]F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 61–62.

[67]Mark 1:8 and 1 Cor 12:13 are possible examples of ἐν plus the dative indicating agency. However, these examples are uncertain, and the distinction between agency and instrument related to Jesus' work in the world is unnecessary (see Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 373–74). F. F. Bruce argues that ἐν αὐτῷ in Col 1:16 refers to the sphere in which God created, referencing a parallel construction in Eph 1:4 (Bruce, *Epistle to the Colossians,* 61). However, because of the proximity of δι' αὐτοῦ in Col 1:16, the instrumental dative is more likely. See the discussion in Peter O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, WBC 44 (Waco, TX: Word, 1982), 45–47 for the various arguments between sphere and agency in the use of ἐν αὐτῷ.

[68]Commenting on Heb 1:2c, Ellingworth says that the construction in Col 1:16 is a "synonymous use of διά and ἐν" (Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993], 96). See also Schreiner's discussion of the phrase "in Christ" in Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 314–17.

[69]Other examples of διά plus the genitive indicating agency with a passive verb include Matt 1:22 (τὸ ῥηθὲν ὑπὸ κυρίου διὰ τοῦ προφήτου, 'what *was spoken* by the Lord *through* the prophet'), John 3:17 (σωθῇ ὁ κόσμος δι' αὐτοῦ, 'the world *might be saved through* him'), Gal 3:19 (ὁ νόμος . . . διαταγεὶς δι' ἀγγέλων, 'the law . . . *was put in place through* angels'), and Eph 3:10 (ἵνα γνωρισθῇ . . . διὰ τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἡ πολυποίκιλος σοφία τοῦ θεοῦ, 'in order that the manifold wisdom of God *might be made known through* the church'). For a discussion of διά plus the genitive with a passive verb indicating intermediate agency, see Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 433–34.

διά plus the genitive, Paul intensifies his description of Jesus' role as God's agent in creation.[70] God is the Creator and Sustainer of the cosmos, and yet he created and sustains *through* the Son.

The author of Hebrews, like John and Paul, also introduces Jesus as God's agent in creation. In Hebrews 1:2, the author affirms that God created the world "through" the Son (ἐν υἱῷ . . . δι' οὗ καὶ ἐποίησεν τοὺς αἰῶνας).[71] In this first chapter of Hebrews, the author highlights Jesus' supremacy over angels and other messengers so that the church would pay close attention to what they have heard from Jesus through the apostles and prophets (cf. Heb 2:1). Part of Jesus' supremacy above angels is that he was not created like them. Instead, he is their Creator. At the beginning of his epistle, the author of Hebrews shows that Jesus was God's agent in creation similarly to the *Memra* and *Yeqara* of the Targums.

While these New Testament passages teach about Jesus' role in the original creation (Gen 1–2), the New Testament also extends Jesus' creative agency into the eschaton. In the book of Revelation, heavenly visions allude to Christ's work as Creator of new heavens and a new earth (Rev 3:12; 21:1; cf. 2 Pet 3:13). In Revelation 3:14, Jesus is given the title "the Amen," probably alluding to Isaiah 65:16–17, where God is called the "God of truth" (באלהי אמן).[72] Isaiah indicates that the "God of truth" will "create new heavens and a new earth," while Revelation 3:14, teaches that Jesus, who is

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[70]As the divine Creator, Jesus also upholds the created order as God's agent in preservation (Col 1:17). Paul uses another instrumental dative in Col 1:17 to indicate agency in preservation. As before, a strict distinction between the instrumental dative and personal agency is unnecessary. Both highlight Jesus' role as God's agent/instrument in creation and preservation.

[71]Frank Thielman, *Theology of the New Testament: A Canonical and Synthetic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 591; William Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, WBC 47A (Waco, TX: Word, 1991), 12; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 47.

[72]Osborne, *Revelation*, 204–5.

the Amen, is the "beginning of God's creation."[73] The New Testament clarifies and explains the creation process through an agent by ascribing creation to Jesus, the new "Amen." Grant Osborne argues that Laodicea would have been uniquely familiar with this language since their sister church, Colossae, was given the same message regarding Christ and creation (cf. Col 1:15–16, 18).[74] What was once an adjectival modifier for God the Father (אמן) has become a title for the Son of God (ὁ ἀμήν).[75] From Jesus, God's agent in the first creation, will come the second creation as he continues his role as God's creative agent.

Divine agency in redemption. The Targums often describe the *Memra* with the title "redeeming God" (אלה פריק).[76] *Neofiti* Genesis 17:8 says that God will be for Israel a redeeming God by his *Memra* (ואהוי במימרי להון לאלה פריק).[77] *Neofiti*

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[73]Grant Osborne says, "God's truthfulness is particularly seen in his control of creation, and here this is also a major attribute of Jesus as the Son of God" (ibid., 204). The phrase ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ is somewhat problematic regarding whether it is temporal or indicative of source or origin. Osborne draws from the similar meaning of ἡ ἀρχή in Colossians 1:18 to refer to preeminence, but he continues, "Αρχή means not only preeminence or ruler but also "source" or "origin," and that is a likely connotation here" (ibid., 205). David Aune refers to the temporal aspect of ἀρχή, to say that Jesus has temporal priority over creation (David Edward Aune, *Revelation*, WBC 52A [Dallas: Word, 1997], 256). However one takes the idea of "beginning," that it is linked to Col 1, John 1, and Gen 1 suggests that Jesus, the Amen, is the faithful Creator who was formerly identified as אלהי אמן in Isa 65:17.

[74]Osborne, *Revelation*, 205.

[75]Osborne says, "Jesus is the beginning and source of 'God's creation'" (ibid.). If Jesus is the source (headwaters) of creation, then he is the preeminent Son from whom the creation poured forth. When one combines this idea with economic subordination within the Trinity, Jesus must be understood as an agent. Jesus is the source of creation ontologically as God; and yet he is the agent of creation functionally as the Son of God.

[76]The Aramaic construction here is again the *peal* participle indicating occupation or divine title. To exist as a "Redeemer" is part of the *Memra's* nature in this sense.

[77]The title "Redeemer God" (אלה פריק) functions as an accusative of situation. With the participle (פריק), this phrase suggests God's regular and repeated behavior or occupation. To link this title to the *Memra, Tg. Neof.* Gen 17:3 indicates that the *Memra* was the one speaking with Abraham, describing himself as "existing in the status of a Redeemer God" for future Israel. The ב attached to במימרי could be understood as an instrumental ב or a ב *essentiae* (Williams, *Williams' Hebrew Syntax*, §249; GCK, §119; JM, §133c.). The instrumental ב would indicate that God exists as a Redeemer God *through* his *Memra.* The ב *essentiae* would suggest that God exists as a Redeemer God *as* the *Memra*, namely God's nature

Leviticus 22:33 and 25:38 both suggest the purpose of God redeeming Israel from Egypt was "so that my *Memra* would exist in the status of a Redeemer God for you" (*Tg. Neof.* Lev 25:38, למיהוי ממרי לכון לאלה פרוק).[78] In addition, *Targum Psalms* 55:17 [MT Ps 55:16] says that the psalmist's confidence is that the *Memra* of the Lord will redeem him (ומימרא דיהוה פרוקי יתי). Here, the *Memra* is the grammatical subject of the verb, יפרוק, highlighting his role as God's agent to redeem. *Targum Psalms* 143:9 interprets the psalmist finding refuge in the Lord as reckoning the *Memra* to be a redeemer (פריק).[79] Finally, the prophets also explain the *Memra* as a redeeming agent for Israel (*Tg. Hos* 3:2; *Tg. Joel* 2:17; *Tg. Zech* 10:12). Whether using the participle to indicate occupation or the *Memra* as a grammatical subject of the verb פרק, the Targums show that God used an agent in redemption.[80]

The exodus event stands as God's great redemption of his people in the Old Testament, and the Targums attribute this rescue to the *Memra.* In *Neofiti* Exodus 14:30–

(essence) actively involved in the created order. In either case, the targumic interpretation suggests that God redeems through his *Memra*.

[78] *Tg. Neof.* Lev 22:33 includes the ב before *Memra* indicating more directly the idea of "by" or "as." It reads, מיהוי במימרי לכון לאלה פרוק.

[79] פצי יתי מבעלי דבבי יהוה מימרך מניתי לפריק, ('Deliver me from my enemies, O Lord; your *Memra*, I have considered as a redeemer'). Again, the Targum uses the participle with a ל preposition as an accusative of situation indicating occupation. Literally, the Targum could be translated, "I have reckoned your *Memra* in the status of a redeemer." As opposed to other uses of the participle, in *Tg. Ps* 143:9, *Memra* lacks the ב preposition so that it functions as the accusative object of the psalmist's "reckoning." Therefore, the *Memra* is the redeemer in this passage as opposed to God existing as a redeemer *by* his *Memra* in other passages. Indeed, the *Memra* is God's agent in redemption and the psalmist finds refuge in this agent.

[80] Another nuance to the idea of *Memra* functioning as a redeemer is that he is described in the Targums as a "Savior God." The Aramaic term is still פרק, which can mean "salvation" or "redemption." *Tg. Neof.* Lev 26:45 attaches the ב *essentiae* to the noun *Memra* to highlight the person or manifestation of God "as" his *Memra.* As the predicate in the sentence, God's *Memra* is the person or manifestation of God who is Israel's "Savior God." Likewise, *Tg. Neof.* Exod 29:45 labels the *Memra* as a "Savior God," but foregoes the ב *essentiae*, leaving *Memra* as the subject of היה. Here, לאלה פרק functions as an accusative of situation so that the *Memra* "exists in the status of (as) a redeemer God." *Tg. Zech* 12:5 says that "deliverance/salvation" (פורקן) has been found "in the *Memra* of the Lord of hosts, their God" (במימרא דיוי צבאות אלההון). In this sense, the *Memra* is Israel's Savior similarly to how Jesus is the Savior of the world (John 4:42; 1 John 4:14).

31, targumic tradition summarizes the exodus event by saying,

> On that day, the *Memra* of the Lord redeemed (פרק) and delivered (שזיב) Israel from the power of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dying, cast upon the shore of the sea. And Israel saw the mighty hand that the Lord acted with in Egypt, and the people feared from before the Lord. And they believed in the name of the *Memra* of the Lord and in the prophecy of Moses his servant.

Neofiti says that the *Memra* was God's agent to redeem Israel from the hand of the Egyptians by substituting מימרא יהוה for יהוה as the subject of the verbs. When God promised Moses that he would redeem Israel out of Egypt, he said that the *Memra* would be Moses' help (*Tg. Onq.* Exod 3:12). *Pseudo-Jonathan* Exodus 13:8 says the *Memra* performed signs and wonders when Israel came out of Egypt, and *Pseudo-Jonathan* Deuteronomy 29:1 specifically ascribes the plagues against Pharaoh to the *Memra*. (cf. *Tg. Neof.* Deut 6:22; 11:4). In *Onqelos* Deuteronomy 4:37, Moses told Israel that because of God's love for them, the Lord brought them out of Egypt "by his *Memra*."[81] *Targum Ezekiel* 16:8 says that the *Memra* "protected" (אגינית) and "redeemed" (קיימית במימרי למפרק יתכון) Israel during the exodus event. In each of these examples, the *Memra* fulfilled various roles as God's agent to bring about Israel's redemption from Egypt. As such, the *Memra* is God's divine agent to redeem.

In the New Testament, Jude may have used terminology similar to the Targums to say that Jesus was God's agent in the exodus redemption. In Jude's appeal for believers to stand firm in their faith, he reminds his audience that Jesus "saved a people out of Egypt, and afterward destroyed those who did not believe" (Jude 5). The manuscripts vary on whether Jude wrote "Jesus" saved God's people from Egypt or whether it was "the Lord," but good evidence exists for Ἰησοῦς as the favored reading.[82]

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[81]The Hebrew of Deut 4:37 says that God brought Israel out of Egypt "by his own presence." The Targum interprets this phrase as "by my *Memra*" indicating that God's presence in Egypt to deliver Israel was his agent. In this passage, the *Memra* is both God's agent and manifest presence, demonstrating how closely the Targums viewed *Memra*, *Shekinah*, and *Yeqara*.

[82]For Ἰησοῦς in Jude 5, the manuscript evidence includes A B 33 81 322 323 424[c] 665 1241 1739 1881 2298 2344 vg cop[sa, bo] eth Origen Cyril Jerome Bede (Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on*

If "Jesus" is the correct reading, Jude may have applied the redemptive work of the *Memra* to Jesus (cf. *Tg. Neof.* Exod 14:30).

The broader context of Jude's statement in Jude 5 also fits well with *Neofiti* Exodus 14:30–31. *Neofiti* Exodus 14:31b highlights Israel's belief in the *Memra* as an important part of their rescue and continued preservation in the wilderness. Jude highlights the requirement of Israel's faith by saying that those who *did not believe* were destroyed.[83] The Old Testament passages Jude possibly refers to are Numbers 14 and 20, both of which have targumic traditions that indicate Israel's grumbling was due to a lack of belief in the *Memra* (*Tg. Onq.* Num 14:11–12; *Tg. Onq.* Num 20:12).[84] The exodus generation failed to enter the promised land because of their lack of faith. Jude teaches that in spite of Jesus redeeming Israel from Egypt, grumbling revealed their lack of faith and caused their demise. Jude warns believers of falling away from the "faith that was once for all delivered to the saints" by providing an example of the great work of redemption God's agent performed at the exodus. Jude appropriately identifies God's agent as Jesus.

Like Jude, Paul also identifies Jesus as God's agent in redemption. In

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the Greek New Testament, 2nd ed. [New York: United Bible Societies, 1971], 657). In *The Greek New Testament*, ed. Barbara Aland, et al., 4th ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2001), the text reads κύριος, but with a {D} rating by the text critical committee. Metzger prefers the reading Ἰησοῦς, arguing it is "the best attested reading among Greek and versional witnesses" (Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 657). Metzger also points out that this unique reference to Jesus, similar to 1 Cor 10:4, may have led copyists to substitute κύριος (ibid.). See Philipp F. Bartholomä, "Did Jesus Save the People out of Egypt? A Re-Examination of a Textual Problem in Jude 5," *NT* 50, no. 2 (2008): 143–58, for his discussion of the textual evidence along with arguments both for and against the reading Ἰησοῦς. See also Jarl Fossum, "Kyrios Jesus as the Angel of the Lord in Jude 5–7," *NTS* 33, no. 2 (1987): 226–43.

[83]Several targumic passages also attribute the judgment on the wilderness generation to the *Memra* (*Tg. Ps.-J.* Num 16:11, 26; *Tg. Neof.* [mg.] Num 16:30; *Tg. Neof.* [mg.] 21:6).

[84]*Tgs. Onq.* and *Ps.-J.* Deut 9:23 combine several metaphors for Israel's lack of faith. *Tg. Onq.* Deut 9:23 says, "And when the Lord sent you up from Reqem Geah, saying, 'Go up and inherit the land that I have given you,' then you refused the *Memra* of the Lord your God, and you did not believe him, and you did not receive his *Memra*." Refusing the *Memra*, not believing the *Memra*, and failing to receive the *Memra* all have parallels in the wilderness journeys that indicate the generation destroyed in the wilderness failed to believe just as Jude affirms.

Ephesians 1:7, he says "in [Christ] we have redemption through his blood" (Εν ᾧ ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ). Paul uses the typical construction for agency, διά plus the genitive, to teach that believers have redemption through the blood of God's agent.[85] The pronoun, αὐτοῦ, refers to "the Beloved" of Ephesians 1:6, and therefore, God redeems "through" the Beloved's blood.[86] Therefore, Jesus is God's agent of redemption as Christians are united by faith "in Christ."

Whereas Ephesians 1:7 links Jesus' blood and redemption, Colossians 1:14 implies that Jesus' blood functionally secures redemption. In order to convince the Colossian church that they have the ability and motivation to "bear fruit in every good work," Paul reminds them that God the Father has delivered them "from the domain of darkness and transferred [them] to the kingdom of his beloved Son" (Col 1:13). The Colossians stand as passive recipients of this transfer, and Paul attaches the prepositional phrase, εν ᾧ ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν, to further define the Son's work in this transfer. God transfers believers into the kingdom of Christ by means of redemption in Christ (εν

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[85]Col 1:20 and Heb 13:12 provide further examples of διά plus the genitive to suggest agency through Jesus' blood. Col 1:20 relates reconciliation "through the blood of his [Jesus'] cross" (διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ). Heb 13:12 connects sanctification to the agency of Jesus' blood saying, "Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify a people through his blood" (Διὸ καὶ Ἰησοῦς, ἵνα ἁγιάσῃ διὰ τοῦ ἰδίου αἵματος τὸν λαόν, ἔξω τῆς πύλης ἔπαθεν). For agency in Eph 1:7 specifically, see Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 106.

[86]Eph 1:6–7 alludes to an intricate relationship between Jesus' person and blood. The Scriptures couple blood and redemption regularly, especially in the exodus narrative. The Old Testament describes the exodus from Egypt using redemption language (Exod 6:6; Deut 7:8). That the redemption from slavery in Egypt is closely connected to the blood on the doorposts and lintels of Israelite houses is no coincidence. God rescued Israel from the destroyer during the Passover when he "saw" the blood of the paschal lamb (Exod 12:13, 23). Therefore, the Old Testament prefigures redemption by means of blood, and the New Testament makes the connection to Jesus' person clear (1 Cor 5:7). In God's redemptive plan, he redeems by means of blood. Similarly to how God redeemed Israel from Egypt by the blood of the Passover lamb, God has redeemed believers who are integrally related to Jesus' blood by faith. Jesus' person provides the blood that is the means of redemption, and without the person, there would be no blood. Since Jesus' blood and his person are so closely related, one can see that when Jesus' blood functions as a grammatical agent, the implication stands that Jesus is the agent. J. Behm says, "The interest of the NT is not in the material blood of Christ, but in His shed blood as the life violently taken from Him. Like the cross, the 'blood of Christ' is simply another and even more graphic phrase for the death of Christ in its soteriological significance." In Johannes Behm, "αἷμα," in *TDNT*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 1:174.

ᾧ). Although Paul omits διά plus the genitive as grammatical agency of Christ's blood in Colossians 1:14, the Colossian church likely knew this connection to redemption, especially with "blood of the cross" later in Colossians 1:20. Like Ephesians 1:7, Paul once again implies that the Son is God's agent in personal redemption. To be "in Christ," means that believers are in the "sphere" of his care through his redemptive work on the cross. However, since this redemptive work required a person, Paul implies that Jesus functions as God's active agent to secure redemption through his blood.

Like Paul's arguments above, the author of Hebrews also teaches Jesus' redemptive agency in Hebrews 9:12. Jesus entered the holy places "by his own blood" (διὰ δὲ τοῦ ἰδίου αἵματος), not by the blood of bulls and goats from the Old Covenant. The result of Jesus entering the holy places by means of his blood is that he secured an "eternal redemption" (αἰωνίαν λύτρωσιν) for those united to him by faith (Heb 9:12c). According to Hebrews, Jesus secured redemption through his own blood.[87] Slavery to sin has been abolished and God's people have been redeemed through Jesus' blood. Christ, God's agent, secured an eternal redemption for those united by faith to his work.

Divine agency in judgment. Just as the *Memra* was God's agent in creation and redemption, he also functioned as God's agent in judgment. Several targumic passages were discussed earlier to show that John used targumic terminology to describe Jesus as the "Word of God" in the context of judgment (Rev 19:13). Other targumic passages indicate that the *Memra* was God's agent to exact justice, and the New Testament authors expanded this concept to speak of Jesus' role as God's agent in retributive justice. *Neofiti* Genesis 19:24 attributes the judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah to the *Memra*. Although God heard Moses' prayer on Israel's behalf and

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[87]Speaking of the English translations of Heb 9:12, which seem to distinguish Jesus' blood from his person, Ellingworth says that these translations "should not be misunderstood as distinguishing between Christ's blood and Christ himself." In Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 452.

relented from his anger, *Neofiti* Deuteronomy 9:19 indicates that the people feared the wrath that the *Memra* of the Lord had against them to destroy them. Several passages in *Targum Ezekiel* suggest that the *Memra* decreed retribution on Israel because of their sins (e.g., *Tg. Ezek* 28:10; 38:19). These passages, combined with the ones discussed earlier, confirm that the *Memra* was God's agent to deliver justice.

Throughout the Old Testament, readers are reminded that Yahweh is the judge (Deut 32:4; 1 Sam 2:10; Ps 7:8, 11; 9:8; 96:13; Isa 3:13; 33:22), and yet Jesus fulfills this role in the New Testament. Jesus indicates in John 12:48 that the words he has spoken will judge men on the last day (ὁ λόγος ὃν ἐλάλησα ἐκεῖνος κρινεῖ αὐτὸν ἐν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ). Jesus proclaimed the words that will judge those who reject him similarly to how the *Memra* decreed judgment in the Targums (e.g., *Tg. Jer* 4:28; *Tg. Ezek* 5:15; 21:22; 38:19). According to Paul, *God* will judge the secrets of men's hearts *through* Jesus' agency (Rom 2:16, διὰ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ). These two passages affirm that Jesus is God's agent to judge, and other New Testament passages refer to Jesus as the authoritative King who will judge the nations in the eschaton.

In Jesus' discussion of eschatological judgment (Matt 25:31–46), he draws attention to Joel's prophecy of judgment on the nations (Joel 3:1–12). Whereas Joel indicates that Yahweh will gather the nations for judgment (Joel 3:2; 12), Jesus says that the Son of Man sits on his throne and judges the nations (Matt 25:31–32). In Matthew's gospel, Jesus is the King who rightly executes justice from his throne. Paul combines these two categories of justice/judgment when he tells the church that Jesus has been raised and seated far above all rule and authority and has had all things placed under his feet (Eph 1:20–21; cf. Dan 7:13–14). Jesus is God's agent who accomplished justice, confirmed by his resurrection, and will eventually judge the nations from his throne (Rom 14:10; 2 Cor 5:10; Rev 20:11–15).

Paul draws attention to the day of Jesus' final appearing as a day of

judgment.[88] In Paul's letters to the Corinthians and Thessalonians, Paul speaks of the "day of the Lord" referring to Jesus' second coming. Because the day of the Lord Jesus will be a day of judgment (2 Cor 1:14; 5:10; 2 Thess 1:7–10), Paul prays that God will keep the church blameless so that judgment will be mild, or perhaps God will even offer a reward (1 Thess 3:13; 5:23b). Either result indicates that Jesus is the judge who distributes both recompense and commendation. In 1 Corinthians 4:4–5, Paul states that judgment will come from God through an agent. Paul teaches that it is "the Lord who judges" (1 Cor 4:4), likely implying it is Yahweh who judges. Because Yahweh is the judge, Paul exhorts the Corinthians not to judge him "before the Lord comes" (1 Cor 4:5). Paul means that the Corinthians should not judge before *Jesus* comes to execute justice.[89] When Jesus comes to "disclose the purposes of the heart," "each one will receive his commendation *from God*" (1 Cor 4:5b). In this section of the letter, Paul indicates that Jesus (the Lord) is God's agent through whom men are judged and will receive their commendation. God is the source of judgment; Jesus is his agent.

In these examples, Jesus functions as God's agent to deliver justice. Just as the *Memra* was God's agent to deliver justice, so also Jesus sits on his heavenly throne ready to execute judgment on God's enemies on the final day of the Lord (Rev 5:1–14).

Divine Manifestation

Jesus as the divine manifestation. In the Targums, *Shekinah* and *Yeqara* represent different nuances of God's self-manifestation. The *Shekinah* is God's dwelling presence, while the *Yeqara* is God's weighty glory revealed to men. The New Testament demonstrates that Jesus is the manifestation of God by using terminology like *σκηνόω*

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[88]Millard J. Erickson, *The Word Became Flesh: A Contemporary Incarnational Christology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 473–74.

[89]Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 162. Contra Carl R. Holladay, *The First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians* (Austin, TX: Sweet Publishing Company, 1979), 60, who sees "the Lord" as God.

(e.g., John 1:14) and δόξα (e.g., Heb 1:3), which is similar to the Targums. In addition to using terms similar to the targumic *Shekinah* and *Yeqara*, the New Testament also employed the theological concept of divine manifestation to speak of Jesus as the premier revelation of God (cf. Heb 1:1–2). Jesus performed the works that God sent him to do as well as exhibiting divine characteristics that were ascribed only to God in the Old Testament. By using concepts similar to the targumic *Shekinah* and *Yeqara*, the New Testament shows that Jesus was God's presence, indeed his very nature, dwelling among men.

In several passages, the New Testament teaches that Jesus is the revelation of God. Matthew says that as the authoritative representative of the Father, Jesus actively chose to reveal him (Matt 11:27 [Luke 10:21–22]). After affirming that no one has seen the Father (John 5:37; 6:46), John says those who have seen the Son have also seen the Father (John 12:45; 14:9).[90] In 1 John 1:1–4, John reiterates several themes from the prologue to his gospel, indicating that Jesus (the Life) had been heard (ἀκηκόαμεν), seen (ἑωράκαμεν), looked upon (ἑωράκαμεν), and touched (ἐψηλάφησαν). The Life, who was with the Father, was made manifest so that the world would know the fellowship believers have with the Father (1 John 1:3–4).[91] John Frame says, "Even apart from his humanity, the Son is the perfect reflection of his Father and therefore the Father's perfect representative . . . . Jesus is the supreme theophany of God."[92] As the "supreme

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[90]In this twist of literary irony, John expresses both strict monotheism and Jesus' agency in manifesting the Father. God the Father is transcendent, and yet the Son, as the divine manifestation, perfectly reveals the Father's nature to the world. In this sense, no one can see the Father, and yet the whole world sees the Father's nature through/in Christ.

[91]Colin Kruse notes that the Word of life here focuses on a distinct notion of the Word in John 1 that existed with the Father in eternity past. Here, John focuses primarily on the Word of life that has been revealed through flesh and blood in the person of Jesus Christ rather than the Son of God in relation to the ontological Trinity of eternity past. In Colin Kruse, *The Letters of John*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 51–52.

[92]John Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2013), 893.

theophany of God," Jesus manifested God through his incarnation.

Jesus also manifested the Father by appealing to his ontological identity with God. Jesus' claims to divine status indicate that he displays the nature of God to the world. In John 10:30, Jesus said, "I and the Father are one," pointing his disciples to the display of the Father's attributes through his person and work. Likewise, Jesus claimed to have existed eternally as and with God in John 17:24, having a glory identical to the Father. Jesus' "I AM" statements also imply a claim to deity, and therefore, suggest that he is the manifestation of God by means of the incarnation.[93] As God in the flesh, Jesus manifested God's ontological nature to the world. Jesus and the Father share identical natures just as Jastrow equates the מימרא דייי with יהוה.

In addition to ontological identity, Jesus manifested divine attributes that were exclusive to God in the Old Testament. Jesus is described as eternal (John 5:26; Rev 1:8; 22:12–12; cf. Ps 90:1–2; Isa 9:6), immutable (Heb 1:5, 10–12; 13:8; cf. Ps 102:25–27), omnipotent (Phil 3:20–21; Col 1:17; Heb 1:3; cf. Gen 18:14, Matt 19:25–26), omniscient (Mark 2:8; John 1:48; 6:64; 16:30; cf. Isa 41:21), and omnipresent (Matt 18:20; 28:20; cf. Jer 23:23–24). In all of these attributes, Jesus expressed the very nature of the Father (Heb 1:3; χαρακτήρ).

Finally, Jesus manifested God through his work in the world (Acts 2:22). The New Testament teaches that Jesus accomplished works that were previously attributed to God in the Old Testament. Creation (John 1:3; Col 1:16; cf. Gen 1:1), preservation (Col 1:17; Heb 1:3; cf. Neh 9:6), giving eternal life (John 10:28; 17:2; 1 John 2:25), and

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[93]See for example, B. Witherington, *John's Wisdom* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995), 156–58; A. M. Okorie, "The Self-Revelation of Jesus in the 'I Am' Sayings of John's Gospel," *CurTM* 28, no. 5 (2001): 486–90. See further, David Daube's discussion of "I am" in rabbinic Judaism as indicative of God's divine presence (David Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* [London: Athlone Press, 1956], 325–29). The example Daube discusses from Deut 26 in the Passover Haggadah suggests that "I am" refers to God's direct presence to redeem Israel during the exodus (ibid., 328). Daube relates this phrase to instances in the New Testament where Jesus is the "I am" and is God's direct presence to redeem.

forgiving sins (Mark 2:5–7; Luke 7:47–49; Col 1:14; 3:13; cf. Isa 43:25) are various works of God alone that Jesus performed according to New Testament revelation. Not only was Jesus God's agent in these works, but also, by performing these works, he manifested the nature and character of God. Jesus encouraged his disciples to believe the *works* that he had done *so that* they would understand that he and the Father are one (John 10:38; cf. John 14:10). In these works, Jesus made the Father known.

The title "Image of God" indicative of divine manifestation. The New Testament picture of Jesus as the "image of God" provides a helpful summary of many of the conclusions drawn so far. In passages where Jesus is described as the "image of God," he also acts as God's agent or manifests God through his agency. In his humanity, Jesus is the fulfillment of the *imago Dei* instilled in Adam and Eve. Furthermore, in his deity, Jesus is the "image of God," who perfectly displays the Father to the world by carrying out the work the Father sent him to do. In the passages where Jesus is the "image of God," one will find similar targumic themes to those delineated previously regarding divine agency and manifestation.

In Colossians 1:15, Paul provides the most explicit reference to Jesus as the image of God. Here, Paul calls Jesus the "image of the invisible God" (cf. 1 Tim 1:17). Judaism's God, who is transcendently invisible, is now conspicuously clear in the person of Jesus Christ.[94] In addition to recalling the "image of God" theme from Genesis 1:26–27, Paul also refers to Jesus as the "firstborn of all creation." Using these epithets for Jesus, Paul identified Christ as the quintessential human, who expressed the image of God perfectly (Ps 89:27; cf. Gen 1:26–27; 9:6). Whereas humanity failed, Christ displayed all the perfections of rule and authority indicative of God's character. In doing

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[94]Hermann Kleinknecht says, "Thus εἰκών does not imply a weakening or a feeble copy of something. It implies the illumination of its inner core and essence." In Hermann Kleinknecht, "εἰκών," in *TDNT,* ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 2:389.

so, Jesus displayed to the world God's intent for mankind as the image of God. Jesus perfectly displayed the Father's "image," a task that humanity failed to accomplish. In this way then, Jesus is the premier manifestation of God, the image to which all humanity should strive (Rom 8:29; 1 Cor 15:49).

In the surrounding context of Colossians 1:15, Paul highlights the roles that Jesus accomplished as the "image of God." In Colossians 1:13–14, Paul declared that God "delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." As the image of God, Jesus is God's agent in redemption much like the pillar of cloud and fire was at the exodus (*Tg. Onq*. Exod 13:21; 14:19). Paul continues in Colossians 1:16–20, that Jesus is God's agent in creation, preservation, and reconciliation. All things were created "through him" (Col 1:16b, δι' αὐτοῦ), "in him" (ἐν αὐτῷ) all things hold together (Col 1:17), and "through him" (δι' αὐτοῦ) God reconciled to himself all things (Col 1:20) because in Christ all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell (Col 1:19).[95] These aspects of Jesus' roles are similar to the roles of the *Memra, Shekinah,* and *Yeqara* previously discussed in this chapter. Using terms and concepts similar to the Targums, Paul taught that Jesus is God's agent and manifestation with the title "image of God."

In 2 Corinthians 4:4, Paul again identifies Jesus as the "image of God." The god of this world, Satan, has blinded the minds of those who fail to believe in Christ, and they are unable to see the "light of the gospel of the glory of Christ" (2 Cor 4:4).[96] Using the relative clause, ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ, Paul further explains Χριστοῦ, calling Jesus

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[95]Paul's title of Jesus as the "image of God" and his teaching that in Jesus, all the fullness of deity dwells are the grounds for Jesus' work as God's agent. Where God's agent is active, God is manifest. Therefore, in this short section of the letter to the Colossians, Paul teaches that Jesus is both God's divine agent and the preeminent divine manifestation using the title, "image of God."

[96]Τῆς δόξης τοῦ Χριστοῦ is understood as a possessive genitive. This glory "belongs to" Christ. See Daniel B. Wallace, *The Basics of New Testament Syntax: An Intermediate Grammar* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 46–47.

the "image of God." In verse 6, Paul indicates that Jesus' glory is a reflection of the glory of God. For Paul, Jesus is the "image of God" because he reveals God's glory to the world. Just as the *Memra* and *Shekinah* shine the radiance of God in the Targums (*Tg. Neof.* Exod 12:42; *Tg. Onq.* Num 6:25), so also Jesus has shone "the light . . . of the glory of God" in the hearts of Christians. The glory of Christ in the gospel *is* the glory of God because Jesus is the image of God.

Finally, the author of Hebrews teaches that Jesus is the image of God using a parallel term, χαρακτήρ. According to Hebrews 1:3, Jesus is "the exact imprint (χαρακτήρ) of his [God's] nature."[97] While this term refers to Jesus' ontological identity with the Father, the author of Hebrews also points to Jesus' fulfillment of functional roles. As the χαρακτήρ of God, Jesus "upholds the universe by the word of his power" (Heb 1:3b). The Son, who created the world (Heb 1:2), also preserves it. Like Paul, the author of Hebrews relates these agent-roles to Jesus as the image of God. Using different theological terminology than Paul, the author of Hebrews portrays the same functional aspects of Jesus' person as in Colossians 1:15 and 2 Corinthians 4:4, 6. Jesus, the image of God, displays the Father's χαρακτήρ to the world as God's agent in creation, preservation, and salvation.

Belief in God's agent as divine manifestation. One aspect of divine manifestation that appears in the Targums is that people believe in the *Memra* when he manifests God's active presence. In *Onqelos* Genesis 15:6, Abraham "believed in the *Memra* of the Lord" after God appeared to him. *Pseudo-Jonathan* Genesis 21:33

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[97]Ellingworth relates χαρακτήρ to εἰκών indicating that these terms have a similar range of meaning. He concludes, "In the present verse, χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ reinforces ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης in describing the essential unity and *exact resemblance* between God and his Son" (Ellingworth, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 99, italics added). See also, Bruce, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 48, and Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, 13, who says, "In v *3a* he used the word *χαρακτήρ* to convey as emphatically as he could his conviction that in Jesus Christ there had been provided a perfect, visible expression of the reality of God."

interprets Abraham planting a tamarisk tree as his setting up a garden in which he would implore others to believe in the name of the *Memra* of the Lord who appeared to him. In *Pseudo-Jonathan* Exodus 14:31, Israel believed in the name of the *Memra* of the Lord who appeared to fight against the Egyptians during the exodus (cf. *Tg. Ps.-J.* Exod 14:25; cf. *Tg. Ps* 106:12). King Hezekiah "trusted" (אתרחיץ) in the *Memra* of the Lord who was his help (*Tg. 2 Kgs* 18:5, 7). In *Targum Jeremiah* 2:2, God remembers the faith of Israel's fathers, "who believed in my *Memra*" during the years they followed Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. The belief Jeremiah refers to was due to the manifestation of the *Memra* during the wilderness journeys (*Tg. Onq.* Exod 13:21; 17:1; *Tg. Onq.* Num 9:18–20, 23). Finally, the Ninevites "believed the *Memra* of the Lord" (*Tg. Jonah* 3:5).[98] Each of these examples shows that belief in the *Memra* was the result of the Lord's action through the *Memra* or a manifestation of God in the *Memra*.

In the same way that the *Memra* manifests God and elicits faith, so also Jesus is God's agent in whom men should believe. According to Paul, Scripture makes people wise unto salvation "through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim 3:15; διὰ πίστεως τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ). Elsewhere, Paul teaches that one is justified by faith in Christ Jesus apart from works of the Law (Rom 3:28; Gal 2:16). Additionally, God deflects his wrath away from those who have faith in Jesus so that God would be just and the justifier of those united to Christ (Rom 3:25–26). God imputes righteousness to believers, not because of their deeds, but through faith in Jesus Christ (Rom 3:22, 4:5; Phil 3:9).[99] Belief in Jesus

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[98]*Tg. Jonah* says that a "word of prophecy" (פתגם) from the Lord was with Jonah so that he would go preach repentance to the Ninevites. Upon going, the people believed in the *Memra*. What was once a פתגם ('word') of prophecy elicited belief in God's agent, the *Memra*, similarly to how the word of God (Scripture) elicits belief in God's agent, the Word of God.

[99]In many of these passages, faith is grammatically defined as "faith *of* Christ." See Daniel Wallace's discussion of the objective/subjective genitive specifically regarding πίστις Χριστοῦ (Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 114–16). Wallace argues ultimately that these texts should be read as subjective genitives referring to Jesus' faithfulness. However, he also says, "the faith/faithfulness of Christ is not a denial of faith *in* Christ as a Pauline concept, but implies that the object of faith is a worthy object, for he himself is faithful" (ibid., 116). For a sampling of the literature related to πίστις Χριστοῦ, see Michael R. Whitenton,

produces eternal life (John 3:16, 36; 6:40), and John links faithful obedience (sanctification) to the gift of the Spirit received by faith in Jesus (John 7:38). Finally, Paul links the believer's perseverance to faith in Jesus (Gal 2:20; cf. Rev 14:12). As God's manifest, active agent, Jesus is the one in whom men should believe. His manifestation and ministry on earth, recorded in Scripture, illustrates the mighty works of God by which men put their faith in Jesus.

The πιστεύω word group in the New Testament further demonstrates that Jesus is the appropriate object of faith. Those who believe in Jesus' name are given the right to become children of God (John 1:12). Indeed, Jesus came into the world to bear witness about the light so that all would believe through him (John 1:7; ἵνα πάντες πιστεύσωσιν δι' αὐτοῦ). Because of faith in Jesus, Peter calls Christians "believers in God" (1 Pet 1:21; cf. John 12:44; 14:1). Finally, belief in Jesus is often what heals the sick and the lame in the gospels and Acts (Matt 9:22; Mark 10:52; Luke 18:42; Acts 3:16).[100]

Other passages imply faith in Jesus but without a direct vocabulary (Rom 5:1–2; Gal 3:14, 26; Col 2:12; Jas 2:1; 1 Pet 1:21). Some New Testament authors indicate the importance of faith in Jesus as a commendation for those who believe, or as a warning if one does not believe in Jesus. Paul encouraged the churches because he had heard of their faith in Jesus (Eph 1:15; Col 1:4; 2:5; Phlm 5). Alternatively, Jesus reviled his

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"After Pistis Christou: Evidence from the Apostolic Fathers," *JTS* 61, no. 1 (2010): 82–109; Josef Smolík, "Christ: The Foundation of Faith for Our Salvation," *Communio viatorum* 31, no. 1 (1988): 47–55; Todd D. Still, "Christos as Pistos: The Faith(fulness) of Jesus in the Epistle to the Hebrews," *CBQ* 69, no. 4 (2007): 746–55; David J. Downs, "Faith(fulness) in Christ Jesus in 2 Timothy 3:15," *JBL* 131, no. 1 (2012): 143–160; Jermo van Nes, "'Faith(fulness) of the Son of God'? Galatians 2:20b Reconsidered," *NT* 55, no. 2 (2013): 127–39; Walter C. Kaiser Jr., "Is It the Case That Christ Is the Same Object of Faith in the Old Testament? (Genesis 15:1–6)," *JETS* 55, no. 2 (2012): 291–98; Roy A. Harrisville, "Pistis Christou and the New Perspective on Paul," *Logia* 19, no. 2 (2010): 19–28; Paul Pollard, "The 'Faith of Christ' in Current Discussion," *Concordia Journal* 23, no. 3 (1997): 213–28; Brian A. Gerrish, "What Do We Mean by Faith in Jesus Christ," *ChrCent* 116, no. 26 (1999): 932–37.

[100]In many of the healing instances, faith/belief is referred to generally rather than specifically as faith *in Jesus*. However, the implication is that those in these stories are healed because they believed that Jesus was the one who could heal them. They had faith in Jesus, the proper object of such a religious affection, and their faith healed them.

audience for *not* believing that he was the one sent by the Father to reveal the Father (John 5:38; 10:37–38). Elsewhere, Jesus taught that the "work" people should do was to believe in the one the Father had sent (John 6:29). Jesus taught that he came into the world as light so that those who live in darkness would believe in him while they had the light with them (John 12:36, 46). Finally, in the book of Acts, the apostles preached the gospel by exhorting people to believe in Jesus (Acts 16:31; 19:4) similarly to how Abraham exhorted those in Beersheba to believe in the *Memra* (*Tg. Ps.-J.* Gen 21:33). In all of these instances, faith in Jesus is acceptable, effectual, and encouraged. Just as the manifestation of God through the *Memra* required faith, so also the manifestation of God in Christ requires faith.[101]

Worship of God's agent as divine manifestation. Worship of the *Memra* is similar to belief in the *Memra* of the previous section. When God manifests himself through his *Memra*, *Shekinah*, and *Yeqara*, people worship. *Neofiti* Genesis 21:33 says that Abraham would "worship and pray in the name of the *Memra* of the Lord, God of eternity" (פלח וצלי בשם ממריה דייי אלהה דעלמא) at Beersheba.[102] *Neofiti* Leviticus 9:4 provides instructions for a peace offering "because today the *Memra* of the Lord is about to be revealed to you."[103] *Pseudo-Jonathan* Leviticus 9:23 elaborates on the worship in the tent of meeting saying that the "*Yeqara* of the *Shekinah* was revealed over all of the people." God's manifestation in the tent of meeting elicited worship. In *Targum Psalms* 63:5, David will bless the Lord in this age and "in the name of your *Memra* I will spread my hands in prayer in the age to come." These pictures of Old Testament worship were a result of God's agent(s) acting on behalf of Israel or

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[101]For a survey of other links between believing in the *Memra* and believing in Jesus, see Ronning, *The Jewish Targums and John's Logos Theology*, 174–93.

[102]*Tg. Onq.* Gen 21:33 says that Abraham "prayed" to the Lord at Beersheba.

[103]*Tg. Ps.-J.* Lev 9:4 says that the "*Yeqara* of the *Shekinah* was about to be revealed" to Israel.

manifesting God to Israel.

As God's agent and manifestation, Jesus also elicits and accepts worship.[104] When the wise men visited Jesus, they desired to worship him, and Mary and Joseph did not object (Matt 2:2, 11). The wise men recognized Jesus as a unique manifestation of the God of Israel and that realization elicited worship. When Jesus manifested the power of God over creation by calming the storm, those in the boat realized that he was the Son of God and worshipped (Matt 14:23). On several occasions, people and spirits knelt before Jesus indicating a posture of worship (Matt 9:18; 15:25; 20:20; Mark 3:11; 5:6; Rev 5:8). When Jesus rode into Jerusalem during his final week, the crowds met him with great exuberance of praise (Matt 21:9; Mark 11:9–10; John 12:13), and after Jesus' resurrection, the disciples worshiped him (Matt 28:9, 16–17; Luke 24:52). When Jesus manifested the power of God by healing the blind man, he believed and worshiped (John 9:38). Just as *Targum Psalms* 63:5 suggests worship of God's agent in the future, so also, at the eschatological judgment, every knee will bow to Jesus and worship him (Phil 2:10–11). Likewise, in the book of Revelation, many scenes portray worship of the Lamb (Rev 5:9, 11–14; 7:10). In each of these verses, Jesus freely receives worship and never objects as the angels do (Rev 19:8–10; 22:8–9; cf. Acts 10:25–26; 14:11–15).

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[104]Larry W. Hurtado, "The Binitarian Shape of Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism," *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers* 24 (1985): 377–91; Hak Chol Kim, "The Worship of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew," *Bib* 93, no. 2 (2012): 227–41; Crispin Fletcher-Louis, "The Worship of Divine Humanity as God's Image and the Worship of Jesus," in *Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism: Papers from the St. Andrews Conference on the Historical Origins of the Worship of Jesus,* ed. Carey C. Newman, James Davila, and Gladys S. Lewis (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1999), 112–28; Kenneth Schenck, "The Worship of Jesus among Early Christians: The Evidence of Hebrews," in *Jesus and Paul: Global Perspectives in Honor of James D. G. Dunn for his 70th Birthday,* ed. James D. G. Dunn, et al. (London: T & T Clark, 2009), 114–24; Richard Bauckham, "The Throne of God and the Worship of Jesus," in *Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism: Papers from the St. Andrews Conference on the Historical Origins of the Worship of Jesus,* ed. Carey C. Newman, James Davila, and Gladys S. Lewis (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1999), 43–69; Richard Bauckham, "The Worship of Jesus in Philippians 2:9–11," in *Where Christology Began: Essays on Philippians 2*, ed. Ralph P. Martin and Brian J. Dodd (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 128–39; R. T. France, "The Worship of Jesus: A Neglected Factor in Christological Debate?," in *Christ the Lord: Studies in Christology Presented to Donald Guthrie*, ed. Donald Guthrie and Harold H. Rowdon (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1982), 17–36.

In addition to specific vocabulary indicating worship, several New Testament doxologies are addressed to Jesus as worship.[105] In Romans 9:5, Paul elaborates on who Christ is, namely, "God over all, blessed forever." Peter ascribes similar honor and glory to Christ in 2 Peter 3:18. What is normally a general expression of blessing, Peter specifically ascribes to "our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." These passages are somewhat ironic since the Old Testament claims that God alone should be worshiped (Exod 34:14; 20:5). Jesus himself affirmed that only God should be worshiped when he quoted Deuteronomy 6:13 in the wilderness temptation pericope. However, as the previous passages indicate, Jesus freely accepted worship (Matt 2:11; 21:9–16; 28:9–10, 17; John 9:35–39). Indeed, even God commanded that Jesus be worshiped (Heb 1:6; cf. Deut 32:43).

Conclusion

The way in which the New Testament authors spoke about Jesus shows a usage of terms and concepts similar to the targumic presentation of the *Memra*, *Shekinah*, and *Yeqara*. Indeed, Jesus fulfills offices and roles similar to the *Memra*, *Shekinah*, and *Yeqara* as God's agent and manifestation. By understanding the meaning of these targumic terms in their original context, one can see how the New Testament authors may have appropriated these ideas to speak of Jesus in the New Testament. Like the *Memra*, *Shekinah*, and *Yeqara*, Jesus is God's agent in the world, and he is the manifestation of God's nature. Once the New Testament authors apply similar targumic concepts to Jesus, they provide an exegetical method by which one can approach the Targums to find Christ in the Old Testament. Where the *Memra, Shekinah,* or *Yeqara* function as God's agent(s) or manifestation(s), one can probably find Christ, God's premier agent and manifestation.

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[105]Erickson, *The Word Became Flesh*, 470–71.